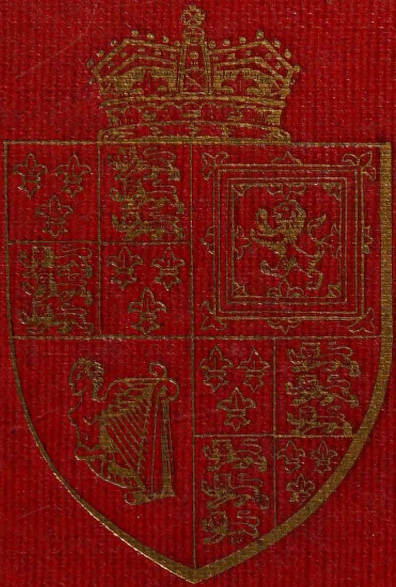

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Royal Charles

RULER AND RAKE

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THE BROWNINGS
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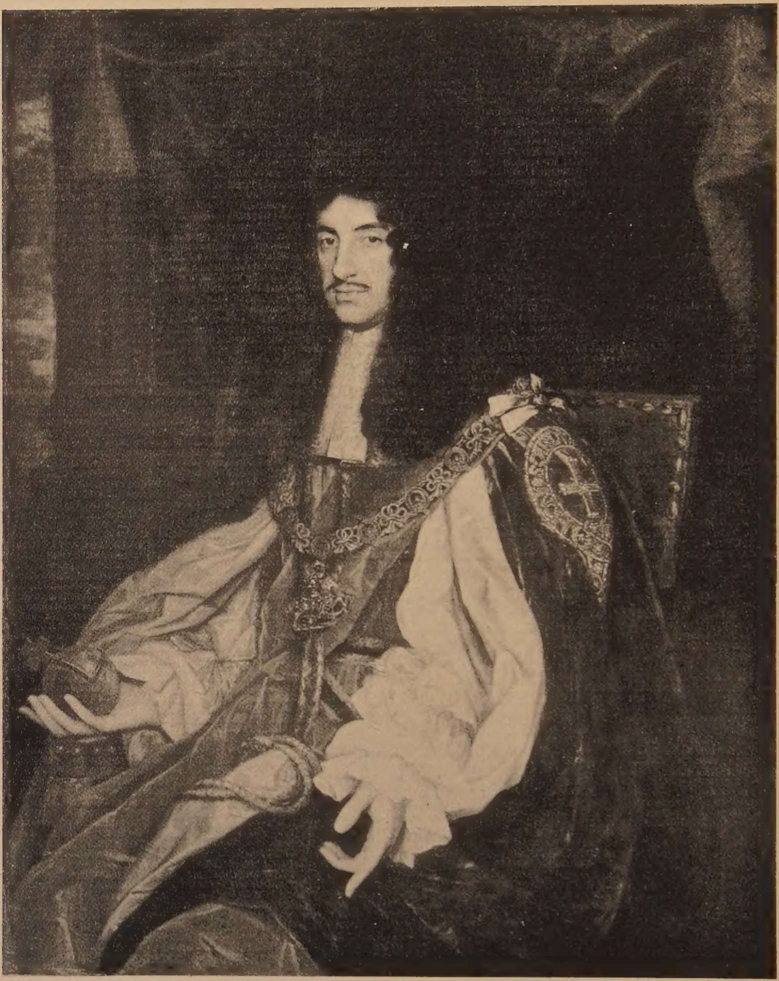

Charles II at 54
"The best that ever reigned over us."

Royal Charles

RULER AND RAKE

BY

DAVID LOTH

NEW YORK
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To

CAROLINE ROBBINS

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Thanks for invaluable assistance in gathering the material for this book are hereby rendered to Emily Hahn, whose talents for research have been displayed in her own work on a collateral subject.

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One

LONDON was making merry with an enthusiasm unknown for a generation. Bonfires blazed in the narrow streets between the carved oaken house-fronts. The flames danced in miniature from every gleaming square of window pane, flickering redly upon the crowds that sweated and drank and shouted amidst the smoke. Above the roar of song and laughter the bells of London's hundred churches rang discordantly and the guns of the Tower thundered pompously. There was so much noise that it penetrated far beyond the walls and " liberties " of London, gathered force from the smaller but equally vociferous throngs of Westminster and rolled echoing across the Thames. It could even be heard faintly at St. James's, the goodly manor house which Henry VIII had built a century ago for Anne Boleyn.

Here, on this twenty-ninth of May, 1630, England had been given a Prince of Wales. A real English Prince, the people were crying joyfully. For to them it was enough that he was born on English soil. Englishmen on this day of thanksgiving were not inclined to quibble because he came of a Scot-Danish father and a Franco-Italian mother. They only rejoiced that when it pleased God to call His Gracious Majesty Charles the First to his Scottish forefathers, England would be ruled once more by a man who had learned in his cradle to love the land. The Englishman of 1630 was easily sentimental about the land, and scorned to conceal the kindly weakness under an affectation of polite frigidity. The Elizabethan tradition was still strong, and when he had emotions he displayed them boldly to the world.

Such an Englishman was not lightly reconciled to the royal house of Stuart. The family were well enough in Scotland, no doubt — it was proper to use some contempt when speaking of the northern kingdom — but England wanted a native born ruler. The desire was all the stronger since the Stuarts had done little to make themselves popular. In their Scottish home, perhaps, they did not need to do anything except trace their descent back to Robert Bruce and to the earlier proud nobleman who had won the post of Hereditary Stewart of Scotland. From him they had taken their name, and only recently changed the spelling.

They had been kings and warriors, but also poets and scholars. They had held their crown — often with the utmost difficulty and at the sacrifice of their lives — in a land of turbulent, illiterate clansmen who regarded civil war as one way of making a living. They had periodically resisted an outraged England, stung to action by border raids or a lust for added dominion. They had struggled with fanatical pietists and ardent reformers. But they had also found the leisure to write songs that the world loved to sing and delve into the scholarship of the past as might any unworldly sage.

One of them married Margaret Tudor, daughter of English Henry, and thus gave England for a heritage to his descendants. But the immediate estate the couple left their son was a disorganized realm — the usual legacy of a Scottish King — and a passion for music. This King James wrote his songs, found him a wife in France, a daughter of the almost royal family of Guise, and died, leaving his claims, his rights and his estates to a little girl who was to make the name of Stuart unpleasantly synonymous with misfortune. This was Mary, whom the great Elizabeth feared, the tragic woman, Dowager Queen of France, Queen of Scots, heiress apparent of England, who flashed across the diplomatic scene of Western Europe, beautiful, unhappy, brilliant, adventurous, romantic, loving and beloved. Her head fell on the block, but she left behind one of the world's most pitiful stories and a timid, awkward, sly son.

The boy was heir to the Tudors and destined to succeed the great Elizabeth. But there were many years of intrigue, many years of fear and bitterness, many years of being bullied and cheated before he claimed his inheritance, a shy, unhappy but shrewd man who had learned from his earliest infancy that no human being could ever be fully trusted. He came to rule an England that accepted him because she could not at once see any alternative and because she had been well drilled in obedience by the Tudors. A few of the great nobles, indeed, were glad to welcome him, for they saw in his weakness opportunities to establish themselves as the real power in the land.

James, sixth of the name in Scotland and first in England, entered his new domains quietly, hastily and unobtrusively like any other immigrant. And like any other immigrant he sent for his family as soon as he felt himself firmly settled in his new home. First came his wife, the Danish Princess Anne, and their eldest son, the rather dashing young Harry. In the name of prudence, the younger children, Charles and Elizabeth, were left for a few more years in Scotland.

The Stuart had surprisingly little difficulty in holding his throne, but he did nothing to erase from men's minds their suspicions of a foreigner. He was cunning and deceitful in the manner of clever but weak men trying to appear strong. However, there was nothing seriously mistaken in his rule until he began to shower the handsomest portions of the Crown estates upon beautiful, obscure young men who had no qualities but their beauty to raise them from obscurity. The virile, violent warriors and the able, ambitious statesmen of Elizabeth's day watched with instinctive aversion and a more rational fear while the Carrs and Villiers rose to favour and light-heartedly guided the destinies of England. Carr's ascendancy was brief and his ruin thorough, but George Villiers was not such easy prey. " Steenie " — James thought his friend resembled portraits of the young St. Stephen — soon moved at the head of the entire peerage as Duke of Buckingham. He rejoiced in the greatest fortune in England; his friends became quite dizzy looking down from the exalted posts he could procure them; he was rapidly acquiring the finest collections of artistic treasures of any private man. His hold on James was unshakeable, for he was clever enough to appear humble and did not hesitate to subscribe his letters to his master " Your slave and dog, Steenie." Furthermore he was well on his way to securing his influence beyond the King's lifetime. The astute, promising Prince Harry, who might have seen through the vanity, pomposity and eccentricity of George Villiers, was dead, and Prince Charles regarded the splendid Duke as a god-like elder brother who could do no wrong. Steenie married and had children, but nothing could tame him. He proposed and carried through adventures which took their inspiration from an idealized Age of Chivalry. He played the knight errant at home and dared to make love to a Queen of France abroad. He spent his money on the maddest freaks, and finally he crowned his career by attempting to engineer an unpopular Spanish marriage for his Prince just because it might be done in the grand romantic manner. He took his young master off to Madrid to woo the maiden in true troubadour fashion, a proceeding which effectually prevented the marriage and almost cost the two adventurers their liberty, for the Spanish court in its formal ceremoniousness regarded such violation of the proprieties as an insult.

James died, but the mad pranks of Buckingham went on. He embroiled the serious young King Charles in frivolous, inconclusive but expensive wars with Spain and France. He exasperated the nobility with a consistency which almost amounted to genius. He remained quite gay and charming and irresponsible. And then one day in 1628 a slightly insane martyr of the old sober school stabbed Steenie through the heart and deprived the King of the only adviser in whom he had confidence.

When his Majesty found another trusted counsellor, he amazed the world. Just after his accession to the throne Charles had been married to Henrietta Maria, youngest of the many children of Marie de Medici and Henry of Navarre, the jovial genius who had subdued France and made her great. In this courtship the more usual procedure for royal marriages had been followed. Charles did not go to Paris to sing beneath the lady's window, although he had a good voice and a pleasing manner. He allowed the politicians to settle the details and received the new Queen with appropriate reserve and indifference.

Her Catholic piety offended his Anglican bigotry — they were equally fanatical in clinging to their religions, as was the custom of the time — but after he had asserted himself to the extent of depriving her of most of her Papist attendants, he settled down to live with her on terms of distant respect. Then, quite unexpectedly and to the astonishment of his court as well as himself, he fell in love with her. After Steenie's death they really began to know each other — as human beings, not merely as consorts. Her wit charmed his cultivated understanding. Her beauty entranced his senses. Her strong will commanded his admiration, and her tiny, slight figure aroused his adoring protectiveness. She returned his love with a fervour which excited comment throughout the civilized world. He was handsome, gentle, kind, courteous, a learned gentleman and a connoisseur of art. But he was not a man of affairs. She was delighted to find that he needed her. The decision and commanding manner which she possessed as a Bourbon, the shrewdness and practical materialism which she inherited from the Medici were admirably designed to supplement his ambitious idealism and genuine humanity.

Englishmen did not take kindly to her sway. Her views were distinctly French and her ideas of monarchy were those of her autocratic father. That might have done in England a generation ago, although even then it had taken an Elizabeth to rule in the royal manner. But now, even if Charles and Henrietta Maria had possessed the old Queen's strength and skill, they would have faced a harder task. The country was no longer so docile. The England of the Stuarts was reaping the benefits of Tudor triumphs and enjoying a prosperity unequalled in her history. Men who understood the position of the country were growing ambitious. Some of them even dared dream of a future in which their nation would be as powerful as France, as rich as the Dutch, head of an empire as large as Spain's. While Europe bled herself white in the Thirty Years War, Englishmen were amassing wealth. Their ships became serious rivals to the Dutch for the world's carrying trade. Merchants, the wealthy members of the Vintners Company or the Wool Company, were building themselves mansions as pretentious as the palaces of great nobles. They had a stake in the country and were demanding a share in directing its destinies.

The gentry, those hitherto generally obscure cousins and acquaintances of Duke and Earls, were also taking an interest in the world outside their park gates. With increasing means, they came more often to London, travelled more extensively abroad, met each other more frequently to exchange ideas. They read books and thought about them. They acquired such a sense of their own importance in the national scheme of things that they proposed to make themselves a decisive force in the government. They had always constituted a majority of the House of Commons, but seldom in the past had the House dared to assert itself. Now its members were speaking their minds boldly and without shame. At the last session a year ago the leaders of this awakening class had actually argued against the old theory that the legislature was designed solely to approve royal policies and raise funds for royal needs. King Charles, horrified by revolutionary tenets such as were never heard in his native Scotland and quite impossible, his wife assured him, in a real monarchy like France, dissolved the Parliament. But before he could do so, Denzil Holles and a few other country gentlemen forcibly held the Speaker in his chair to permit the launching of one more harangue. While the outraged Speaker struggled impotently, Sir John Eliot protested with eloquence — patriotic or demagogic, depending on the point of view — against the collection of taxes which had always in the past been given the throne, but which had not been voted to the present monarch.

It was the climax to much famous talk and remarkably little action. There had been the radicals, Pym and Hampden and young Vane. There had been more moderate counsellors such as Wentworth. But they all seemed agreed that from their order should come the real law of England. They debated and discussed while unnoticed, silent, attentive at the back of the House sat a new member, heavy, just entering middle age and not too immaculate as to linen — Oliver Cromwell. Better no Parliament than such an assembly of meddling sticklers for ridiculous forms, Charles decided as he dismissed them.

To the country at large the political disturbances were ephemeral, uninteresting beside the all-absorbing, passion-stirring, unending disputes of religion. On the Continent Catholic and Protestant were displaying a more than Christian ingenuity in devising tortures for each other. In England the Spirit of the Age, intolerance, was just as strong but more devious. The German, over whose farms and cities the most horrible of all Europe's religious wars was sweeping, had a clear theological choice between being boiled alive by Gustavus Adolphus or chopped to pieces by Wallenstein. The Englishman's religious problem was somewhat less sanguinary, but just as cruel and much more complex.

Catholic Ireland, Episcopal England, Presbyterian Scotland acknowledged one King by the grace of God. But those who disagreed with his high Anglicanism would not admit that heavenly grace had vouchsafed him any clearer insight into religious matters than was possessed by any other of his mistaken faith. In England a host of dissenting sects debated incessantly against the Established Church and with each other. It was only ten years since one stiff-necked group had set the example of seeking a religious Utopia in the New World and had brought Puritanism to New England. Their only point of agreement was a superstitious hatred of Catholicism. The holy flame of missionary zeal was sweeping the country, as it swept all European civilization. Pious men felt it their duty, as they hoped for salvation, to convert an erring neighbour to the pure practice of Christianity. The zealots were willing to use persuasion, but they were impatient fellows and often they were dealing with a man as bigoted as themselves. The faintest obstinacy, once the Truth had been expounded, was conclusive proof of diabolical stubbornness. When the devil entered into men's souls, there was only one set of answers — prison, the pillory, exile or the gallows.

Every other human or social interest was subordinated to the religious, but with a bitterness from which every trace of religion was missing. Only a few rarely contemplative or rarely humane natures could escape the general conviction that there was no sin like the sin of non-conformity and no punishment too severe, for it was only by passing through trials approximating those of his Redeemer that the sinner could hope for divine forgiveness.

The bulk of the patient English labourers of farm and city had accepted the Reformation as they would accept anything that gave them security from their rather nebulous fears. But once those fears, and the passions that went with them, were loosed, the rabble would follow the prophet who preached most convincingly to their simple tastes. It would be too much to expect that the prophets would agree. They shared the popular fears, but they offered half a hundred divinely inspired safeguards. It was not peculiar to the nation or the time that the fears were badly founded on a solid base of ignorance. The people of England were afraid just then of the Pope, afraid of foreigners, afraid of royal favourites, afraid of new ideas. From all of these, they believed, a truly English King would protect them.

And so on this warm May evening, the mob yelled itself hoarse in honor of the infant Prince. In the days that followed, the joy grew less vociferous, for the flesh is weak, but not less lyric. Atrocious verse dripped from the pens of an hundred scribblers in streams of adulation and servility. Astrologers scanned the Heavens and elaborated blissful prophecies around the circumstance that at one o'clock in the afternoon, when the Prince was born, Venus was in the ascendant and actually visible in broad daylight. Stately compliments and expansive gifts came from foreign courts. English noblemen bought new clothes. In every tavern men solemnly drank a toast: " The Prince of Wales."

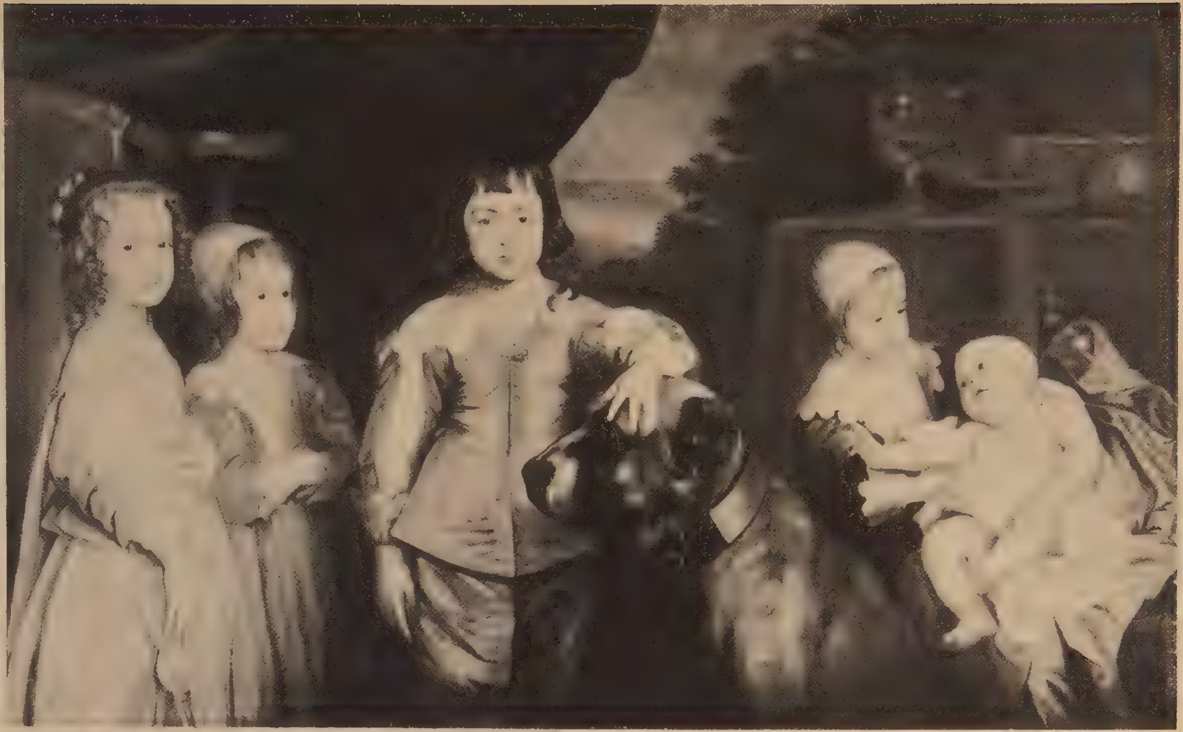
Two

THERE was little trace at St. James's of the hysteria general in the rest of the land. The routine of a royal birth was too well organized to permit anything so impromptu as excitement. The whole thing proceeded according to immemorial plan, and had been carefully rehearsed from old precedents. The necessary witnesses — ladies and gentlemen of high position — were present at the accouchement. His Reverence William Laud, Bishop of London and the King's favourite prelate, was there to confer the name of Charles upon the infant. The customary suite was already assigned. From the cradle to the grave, it was held, a King should never be alone, and this Princeling was to be no exception. A wet nurse, a dry nurse, six women to rock the cradle and a governess of gentle birth were his insurance against solitude.

Of his parents the child saw almost nothing. Most of his earliest years were spent at St. James's while they resided at Whitehall, the centre of politics and diplomacy. Royalty had too much responsibility, was too absorbed in affairs of state to indulge in the luxury of a home. The King and Queen regretted it, for they inclined to domesticity. But they were both strong in a sense of duty, and sacrificed their family life to the publicity of their position. They lived in sight of their son's dwelling but they seldom found time to visit him, nor did they consider it wise to bring him to them. Consequently, he derived little benefit from the most correct, the most polite, the most cultivated court of the day. In none of the royal palaces of the Continent at that time was there such decorum combined with so much beauty and intellect as at Whitehall. Conversation here was properly appreciated as an art. Van Dyck and his rivals were recording the scene and the actors. Inigo Jones was providing the proper architectural setting for their pictures. Literature may have had no such great names as the previous generation could boast, but literary taste was more widely diffused.

At St. James's a simpler life prevailed. It was almost entirely a children's palace. Steenie's daughter and two sons were being brought up there with Charles, for the King still mourned his murdered friend and had sworn to look after the children as his own. At regular intervals there were additions to the circle, brothers and sisters of the Prince — Mary, a year his junior, then two years later James, followed by Elizabeth and Anne, who died very soon, and Harry.

If the King could not be a familiar to his children, he was devotedly attentive to their interests. Their guides and tutors were selected with a judgment which was seldom given to the highest government offices. At the head of the Prince's establishment, as soon as there was need of a governor, was Lord Newcastle, one of the finest gentlemen of his day. He was no wit; his understanding was rather slow but more than usually sure; his attention to correct form was so great as to seem hollow but was actually sincere. He was a sportsman, a genial optimist (for nothing had ever gone wrong in his life) and he was firmly convinced that



Prince Charles with His Brothers and Sisters, 1638

"Not very apte to your booke."

the noblest thing to be said about a great monarch was that he had been a gentleman. Prince Charles was most heedful of my lord's teachings and seriously endeavoured to follow the precepts which his governor drew up for him.

“It is fitt you should have some languages,” wrote the man of much worldly wisdom, “tho' I confess I woud rather have you study things then words, matter then languages, for seldom a Critick in many languages hath time to study sense. Besides I would not have you too studious, for too much contemplation spoiles action, and Virtue consists in that. What you read I would have it History, and the best chosen Histories, that so you might compare the dead with the living; for the same humors is now as was then, there is no alteration but in names, and tho' you meet not with a Caesar for Emperor of the whole world, yet he may have the same passions in him; and you are not to compare fortunes so much as humors, witt and judgment, and tho' you are young in years, yet living by your wading in all those times, be older in wisdom and judgement then Nature can afford any man to be without this help.

“For the Arts I wou'd have you know them so far as they are of use; but whensoever you are too studious, your contemplation will spoile your government, for you cannot be a good contemplative man and a good commonwealth's man; therefore, take heed of too much book.

“Beware of too much devotion for a King, for one may be a good man but a bad King; and how many will history represent to you that in seeming to gain the Kingdome of Heaven have lost their owne. But if you be not religious, God will not prosper you; and if you have no reverence to him, why should your subjects have any to you?

“But S^{r} you are in your own disposition religious and not very apte to your booke, so you need no great labour to perswade you to the one, or long discourses to dissuade you from the other.

" The things that I have discoursed to you most is to be courteous and civil to every body; and believe it, the putting off of your hat and making a leg pleases more then reward or preservation. Then to speak well of every body, and when you hear people speak ill of others reprehend them and seeme to dislike it so much as do not look of 'em favourably for a few days after, and say something in favour of those that have been spoke against; for you may say something of every body to the best; the other which is railing, scorne and jearing is fitter for porters, watermen and carmen then for gentlemen; how much more then for a Prince, whose dislike is death and kills any subject. Besides you may be sure the parties will hear of it and they are traytors in their hearts to you, and of your owne making. Of the other side, to speak well of them will be told too, and that winns them. To loose your dignity and sett by your state I do not advise you to that, for what preserves you kings more then ceremony? The king must know at what time to play the king, and when to qualifie it, but never put it of. To women you cannot be too civil, especially to great ones; what hurt were it to send them a dish from your table when they dine with some of your great Lords, and to drink their health? Certainly S^{r} you cannot lose by curtesy. I woud not have you so seared with majestie as to think you are not of mankinde, nor suffer others or your self to flatter you so much. I mean not by repeating your mortality to have a death's head sett always before you, or to cry every morning that you are mortall, for I would not have you fall into a divine melancholy, to be an anchorett or a capuchin; or with a philosophicall discourse to be a Diogenes in your tubb; but to temper your self so by this means as to be a brave, noble, and just King and make your name immortall by your brave acts abroad and your un spotted justice at home, qualified by your well temper and mercy."

The boy to whom this advice was directed understood it better than most children of his years could have done. He was not, even at eight years old, what the world would call a child. He was a Prince, and in the life of royalty there was no time for childhood's happy hour. At the earliest possible moment he must take his place in the world of men. From the first he was made ready for that. His apartments were a hot-house, his development forced to the limit of his ability to grow. His attendants gave him the watchful respect to which a rarely exotic orchid is entitled. He thrived on it.

His tutors — clerical gentlemen all — found him amazingly receptive of anything that engaged his imagination and quite impervious to what he did not wish to know. He was a strong child, by no means pretty and so dark that men recalled stories of Moorish blood among the Medici. His mother had been quite taken aback by his infantile ugliness, but in boyhood he was only plain. He had too much jaw for his years, but it was no indication of his character. He had enormous black eyes, a cheerful disposition, was immoderately and demonstratively affectionate and was quite easily managed. Since Lord Newcastle's advice suited his taste in the main and since he was ardently devoted to his governor's person, he studied it to such purpose that all who had anything to do with him thought him charming, but endowed with no more than the usual Stuart allotment of brain, a not very considerable portion.

Every day he was out riding, trying hard to be as good a horseman as his father, one of the most graceful in the land. He could have had no better master than Newcastle, who understood and loved horses as few men, even in an age when knowledge of horseflesh was taken for granted. Fencing, dancing and music occupied more time than the bookish pursuits which the governor had recommended in moderation. However, regular hours were devoted to French, history and penmanship. The Prince learned to write a sprawling hand, ugly but more readable than more learned men could boast. Oddly enough, he studied neither Latin nor Greek, which were usually forced upon boys of his age. For the rest he lived under close supervision, but with ample opportunity to follow his own inclinations, climbing trees, hunting insects in the garden, teaching his dogs to obey him, organizing the usual childish games with the Villiers children and his own brothers and sisters. Even the servants who were dazzled by his rank found him, on the whole, a quite normal sort of boy. In spite of his royalty, they invented remarkably few stories of his precocity and genius.

In one branch of his instruction, however, he was admittedly superior. The loyal Newcastle, the courtly tutors and the servants who saw their future fortunes made by present attendance on a Prince of Wales agreed that the boy showed a wonderful grasp of the rudiments of royalty. The history they taught him was the history of kings and queens. He was told of Caesar and the Roman Emperors. He learned to admire the absolutism of the Tudors. The achievements and character of his own grandfather, Henry of Navarre, were expounded as guides for his future. He listened to by no means complete accounts of Spanish kings who had directed the destinies of the world and of their weak descendants. A nation, said his teachers, believing it as firmly as their pupil, was as great or as feeble as its monarch. Patriotism consisted of supporting the King. Idealism meant fighting for the King. Fame lay in dying for the King.

Dimly the child at St. James's knew that there were men abroad in the land who did not accept these principles. But they were base dogs almost set apart from the human race. One did not see them to talk to; one heard of their opinions only from their abusive enemies; one knew they were self seeking or quite mad knaves whose aim was anarchy, the overthrow of religion and the destruction of the state.

But at eight years old even a Prince could understand such things only vaguely and receive them with indifference, deep as they might with repetition sink into his mind. The Prince of Wales thought his first letter from his mother was a much more important matter.

" Charles," she wrote, snatching the time to do so from the fascinating, worrysome, dangerous game of politics and cramping her style to the English she so little understood, " j am sore that I most begin my first Letter with chiding you because j heere that you will not take phisike. I hope it was onlei for this day and that tomorrow you will doe it, for yf you will not j most come to you and make you take it, for it is for your healthe. I have given orders to mylord Newcastell to send mi worde tonight whether you will or not, therefore j hope you will not give mi the paines to goe end soe j rest

Your affectionat mother
Henriette Marie R.

To my deare
Sone the Prince."

* * *

A few days later Lord Newcastle, himself indisposed, received a letter from his fully recovered pupil. Written very carefully along the straight pencil lines which the royal hand had prudently traced before undertaking an epistle to his beloved mentor were these words:

" My Lord

I would not have you take too much Phisick, for it doth allwaies make me worse, and I think it will do the like for you. I ride every day, and am ready to follow any other directions from you. Make hast to return to him that loves you.

Charles P."

Three

WHILE young Charles in his pleasant country manor was learning the way of royalty, his parents were losing it. When Newcastle wrote, " one may be a good man but a bad king," he was describing his sovereign, although my lord was too loyal a subject to be aware of it. Charles the First had many qualities which were admirable in a ruler, but he added to them others which would inevitably lose him his throne. His virtues were supplemented by those of his wife, but they shared their faults together. Demanding loyalty without measure from everyone, they had none to give to any. They were such fertile schemers that they could never adhere to any plan, for they always thought of a better new one before the old was carried out. They were quite incapable of telling the truth, even when it would serve them better than a lie. They had a passion for intrigue. They were unusually susceptible to flattery and impatient of criticism. Though ardent dissimulators themselves, they were pathetically willing to trust any rogue with a ready tongue and a pleasing manner.

For more than ten years they had ruled without a Parliament. The hereditary revenues sufficed to carry on the ordinary expenses of government and Charles, whose pursuit of the beautiful in art was his only extravagance, had not yet had need to ask his faithful Commons for more money. His decision to dispense with their advice was quite in accord with the best traditions. Elizabeth and her predecessors in their days of greatest glory had allowed equally long intervals to elapse between Parliaments. But this time there were murmurings in the land, and the royal policy was nicely calculated to whip them into roars of protest, a mistake of which Elizabeth would never have been guilty.

To his critical subjects it appeared that Charles was indeed "seared with majestie." They were asking for a greater share in the government. His reply was an attempt to deprive them of what little share they had. With admirable patience they withheld their protest until they could voice it constitutionally in Parliament. They did not expect to wait long. The hereditary revenue would not run to battleships and the navy needed refitting. But Charles frustrated them by delving into forgotten archives and emerging with a right to levy on his own initiative a tax to build ships in an emergency. He himself, he said, was judge of the emergency. That was when the murmur began to grow louder, and "ship money" were the words easily distinguished.

It was dangerous enough to rouse the hostility of Englishmen, but Charles also sought to prove himself a stern master in his other two kingdoms. For Catholic Ireland there could be no help in England, and the unhappy island was not strong enough to fight its battles alone. Scotland was another matter. There was no tradition of military rule, as in Ireland, and no tradition of obedience, as in England. It is true the Scots freely gave their King all the temporal power for which he struggled in England, but when he tried to interfere with their religion, the fierce

Presbyterians flew to arms, and they had more than a few sympathizers in England.

Against the rising discontent throughout his dominions Charles had two strong men to help him if he would allow it. Sir Thomas Wentworth, converted from his moderate opposition by royal charm and his distaste for the republicanism of his more extreme colleagues, was ready with sage counsel. He possessed, too, the ability to put his advice into effect. Raised to the peerage as Earl of Strafford, he had been sent Lord Lieutenant into Ireland, and was ruling there with a stern justice which kept the land quiet and might in time furnish a force to quell rebels elsewhere. Laud, who as Bishop of London had baptized the Prince, now headed the Church as Archbishop of Canterbury. His religious views were those of his King, but most of the people regarded them as sinfully near to Catholicism. His advice in spiritual matters was so congenial that it was sought on temporal affairs, and in both it was freely given for autocracy, for the policy which Strafford was making hateful under the name of " Thorough."

These two convinced absolutists might have been successful had they served a stronger or a weaker master. But Charles was neither firm enough to carry through the plan of " Thorough " himself nor willing to leave the direction of it to his aids. Furthermore the Queen disliked and distrusted both of them. Strafford, the slender, round-faced man with the air of a puzzled young philosopher, had no respect for her judgment and would not stoop to pretend that he had. Laud, domineering and undiplomatic, made no effort to conceal his dislike of her Majesty's religion. So at every important turn, these two found themselves checked and thwarted by the King they were trying to save.

“ Thorough ” proved not so thorough after all, and the Scots, goaded to rebellion by a barbarous attempt to force episcopacy upon them, rose against such oppression with the fervour of crusaders. Strafford, called hurriedly back from Ireland to deal with an invasion from the north, and Laud, still at the King’s side counselling no compromise, were delivered into the hands of their enemies. For funds must now be found to finance a war, and ship money would not do. Charles, after eleven years, called a Parliament, and a Parliament would have the right to do as it pleased with two erring members, the Earl and the Archbishop. No men were so hated as those two. All the King’s unpopular acts, the illegal imprisonments, leanings toward Popery, secret persecutions in the Star Chamber, were laid to them, even those against which they had advised. Would-be reformers who were chary of speaking ill of the throne poured out their bitterness upon those who stood nearest it.

On April thirteenth, 1640, the young John Evelyn witnessed what he recorded in his diary as a “ very glorious and magnificent sight, the King circled with his royal diadem and the affections of his people ” riding at the head of a state procession to open Parliament. But the hopeful expectations of his Majesty and Mr. Evelyn were disappointed. Parliament was obsessed with its own grievances and would not listen to the King’s needs. They got so speedily out of hand that at the end of three weeks Charles sent them home again. The Short Parliament was over.

It had, however, loosened tongues and unleashed passions. Under the careful management of such leaders as Pym and Hampden, Vane and Eliot, the people were aroused more and more violently against the King’s despotic counsellors. Great popular demonstrations were staged during the summer. Turbulent crowds raged through the streets crying out against the strong men. One mob from the slums of Southwark attempted to storm the archiepiscopal palace in Lambeth, but was turned back. The acute need for money did not abate and the clamour grew so loud that Charles had to summon another Parliament. On a November day which, wrote the loyal Mr. Evelyn, was " never to be mentioned without a curse," his Majesty made his opening speech to the Long Parliament, and the civil war was begun.

With all the estates of England behind them, the House of Commons held the whip hand and drove hard. Those erring members of the Upper House, Laud and Strafford, were sent to lodgings in the Tower. The Earl, greater object of popular fury, was impeached. Prince Charles, not yet eleven years old, sat beside the throne in Westminster Hall to see the strange spectacle of a King's greatest friend arraigned before his peers for high treason. The boy was with his father in their curtained box through many sessions of this court where the prosecutors ate and drank at all times, the witnesses conversed and the judges wandered in and out while Strafford fought for his life and the cause of royalty. Alone and on the defense he was a match for them all and his foes were obliged to shift their ground. From impeachement they moved to a Bill of Attainder — a simple Act of Parliament declaring that Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, should die and his honours with him.

Prince Charles saw all this as a lesson in statecraft. But it was pleasantly varied by his appearance in an important family event. While the Commons passed the bill against Strafford and the Lords debated it, the King arranged a

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marriage between his eldest daughter, Mary, not yet ten, and little Prince William of Orange, a year her senior.

It was a quiet wedding. Most members of Parliament remained away, for it was said the King had sold his daughter for help against his own subjects. But for the children involved it was a joyous occasion. Early in May Prince Charles and his brother, James, both splendidly attired in silk and velvet like men, led their sister into the King's chapel at Whitehall. Behind them came a procession of little girls in white — a chattering group of ten-year-old bridesmaids — and Prince William was waiting at the altar. Charles, with great dignity, gave his sister away, and the court for that one evening forgot the dangers that were gathering around the throne. While the gayety was at its height, the bride and bridegroom were taken off to be bedded, a merry part of every proper marriage ceremony. King Charles and Queen Henrietta Maria duly saw the children to their couch, bade them goodnight and withdrew. Then William rose, as he had been told to do, and retired to the King's room for the night. Soon thereafter he returned to Holland, leaving his bride with her parents until she should reach some such mature age as fourteen.

The charming little interlude did not check the grim business at Westminster. The Lords were near to the end of their talk, and within a week the King himself led them to their decision. He told some of them, as in confidence, that he could never permit a man who had served him faithfully to die for crimes of which he was innocent. The peers gladly took him at his word. For days they had listened to crowds outside the House yelling for the Earl's head. They were aware that political excitement ran so high even trade stood still to watch, and London was full of starving men. Lean and ragged, they cried not for bread but for blood. During this very week a horde of idle sailors seeking to take justice into their own hands had been bloodily driven back from the Tower.

Since the King was so firm, the noblemen decided, they would avoid unpopularity by yielding. They would not really be guilty of taking a fellow peer's life, since Charles would not sign the bill. The Attainder was voted through on Saturday, May ninth, in a House less than half full, and was carried to the King. That poor, irresolute man promised his answer on Monday — the bill stipulated that the prisoner should die Tuesday — and spent the night in prayer. He found no answer that way, and Sunday morning he admitted he did not know what to do. Strafford himself urged his master to sign. The Earl from his cell in the Tower wrote that his Majesty should not endanger the throne to save a subject who was glad to perish for the royal cause. But still the King hesitated.

Meanwhile London foamed with excitement. Fiery sermons were preached that morning from every city pulpit and stirred the people to frenzy. After services an alarmed court listened to the blood cry of the mob, another lesson in statecraft for the Prince. Outside the palace some five thousand citizens, workmen and apprentices were shouting maledictions and threats. Inside the gentlemen prepared for an attack. Groups of courtiers stood, fingering their swords, at every point of vantage on stairways and corridors. Above them the King was taking counsel.

"Sign," said the officers of state. Charles turned to the bishops, for he had already learned his wife's mind; she had never loved Strafford. The men of religion told him he might clearly do as a King what would revolt him as a man. Only Bishops Ussher and Juxon advised him to follow the dictates of conscience. But Charles could not. He tried all day long, until at last his natural weakness overcame his natural goodness. At nine o'clock in the evening he signed, and Bishop Ussher, falling to his knees, cried out in the hearing of the whole court:

"Sire! Sire! What have you done! I pray God Your Majesty may never suffer for this trouble to your conscience."

Even at this late hour the King had fond delusions of saving his servant. What royal commands could not achieve, royal pleadings might. He had a great faith in the power of monarchy as an abstract idea. An affectionate, friendly, almost condescending appeal, he urged, could not be without its effect upon his enemies. All that night he sat writing, draft after draft, until by morning with the help of wife and friends, the document was finished. His Majesty did not intend to prefer his petition in person. He and all about him recognized in him a stiffness that went not well with a beggar's words. But the Prince of Wales was quite different. He already had learned the attractive manner of wheedling, and his parents naïvely hoped that so much innocent charm would quiet the angriest passions.

So on Monday morning young Charles, gorgeous in robes of state, his dark round face shining above the ermine, marched into the House of Peers. The nobility of England gazed in silence while the little figure came on through their midst, handed his letter to the Lord Keeper of the Great Seal, solemnly acknowledged that great man's reverence and returned with the same careful dignity to Whitehall. His first appearance in politics, though only a walk-on part, had been gracefully done. Behind him the House, still silent, listened to the message he had brought. His Majesty hoped that as he had yielded to their wishes they would yield to him in this, that Strafford's life might be spared under any disabilities, however stringent, they chose to place him. The King was sending this message by " that one of your order who is most dear to me," and he rested " Your unalterable and affectionate Friend." Then followed a postscript which drew eyebrows upwards in polite surprise. Later men said it had been added in malice by the Queen.

" If he must dye," it ran, " it were Charity to Reprieve him till Saturday."

The reader's voice ceased. There was a long hush while men shifted uneasily in their places. Then someone moved that they continue with their business. The royal appeal was quietly laid aside and next day Mr. Evelyn could write:

" I beheld on Tower-hill the fatal stroke which severed the wisest head in England from the shoulders of the Earl of Strafford."

Four

THE same stroke put an end to peaceful days of play and study for the children at St. James's. Prince Charles had made his debut and could not be spared from the cast. With James and Mary he accompanied his father on all sorts of ceremonial occasions, to hunts, to banquets, to country houses, any place where they could be seen by many people. The King was trying to regain his popularity, and the court still had confidence in the power of a sweet family picture to arouse the loyal emotions of honest men.

During the summer and fall there was some reason to hope for success. The long struggle of Strafford's trial, the furious passions his personality had provoked, had exhausted the energies of both sides. Parliamentarians and royalists, both more than a little awed by the extreme turn events had taken, rested and watched each other suspiciously. Neither could ever trust the other again, for Strafford's blood was between them. The revolutionary could never forget how his King had twisted and turned and resisted a demand for justice. The royalist brooded on the shamelessness of a party which could ignore the appeals of a monarch.

Prince Charles was kept quite busy, however, in such work of reconciliation as the court felt might be attempted, and he had a new prompter to give him his lines. The King had found other uses for Lord Newcastle's loyalty, and the Marquis of Hertford took his place at the head of the Prince's household. In the changed conditions of the boy's life, it was just as well. Hertford was preeminently a man of knightly qualities and the times were calling for gallantry in a prince. The Marquis was one of the most famous romanticists of his time. When very young he had fallen in love with Arabella Stuart, King James's only rival for the throne, and had married her. They were promptly locked up in different prisons, but managed to concert plans of escape. He succeeded, and made his way to the Continent, but she was caught and died in captivity. Hertford had then found ready forgiveness for the fault of love and was welcomed back to court. Now he was helping his future King appear to best advantage in public, and it was to him that the Prince owed the happy little speeches which he memorized for important occasions. Typical was his address after being entertained with loyal adulation at Raglands Castle.

" I have heard of the great minds, the true affections of the ancient Britons," said the Prince to his Welsh audience, "and my kind entertainment hath made me confide in your love, which I shall always remember. I give you commendations, praise and thanks for your love, your bounty and liberal entertainment. I know you desire nothing but thanks; you shall be sure of that and my favour as long as I am Prince of Wales."

But the days were passing when royal favour could be anything but a burden to Englishmen. Parliament and the King drifted inexorably into open conflict, and before long Westminster ceased to be safe; it was much too close to rebellious London. His Majesty left his capital to seek aid from loyal subjects elsewhere. He took his two eldest sons with him, and they stood together outside the Castle at Nottingham when the royal standard, emblazoned with the legend " Give to Caesar his due," was unfurled to signalize the commencement of real hostilities, and the end for the brothers of all formal education.

They were hardly ever far from their father now. They watched the formation of an army with keen delight; they rode through the ranks and were enthusiastically cheered; they saw their handsome cousin Rupert drilling the troopers that were for many months to prove invincible. Both boys rather worshipped Rupert. He was, although no Englishman, an epitome of all the best qualities that went into the making of an English cavalier. One of the many children of their aunt Elizabeth and the unfortunate " Winter King " of Bohemia, Rupert had been trained from childhood as a soldier of fortune. Though still in his very early twenties, he was a veteran of the German wars and had proved his generalship in the new methods of warfare of those conflicts. No English commander of three times his years had half his experience or reputation. He was anxious to place both at his uncle's service. He hoped that in return Charles would help his family in Germany. Rupert's father had lost, along with Bohemia, which he had ruled for only a season, the ancestral lands which were his as Prince Palatine. If Rupert's elder brother could be restored to these rich territories, there would be no need for the others to remain homeless adventurers.

But Rupert fought for more than that. He had come to England in the days of his uncle's prosperity and been generously received. He fell easily under the King's charm, and he really engaged his heart in the quarrel with those dull, disrespectful rogues whom it was coming into fashion to call " roundheads." The fellows actually cut their hair, man's crowning glory, in their anxiety to renounce all wordly vanities. Good cavaliers doubted whether they could even be called Christians.

Inevitably religion had crept into a political quarrel; the forces of Church and civic reform were inextricably mingled. And, also inevitably, the difference of creeds was less reconcilable than difference in politics. Men who had believed in the Parliament's rights came into the King's camp because they saw greater danger in the Puritans. Sombre fanatics whom no worldly problem could have tempted from their gloomy contemplation of divine purpose flocked to the Parliamentary army because it was the Lord's host.

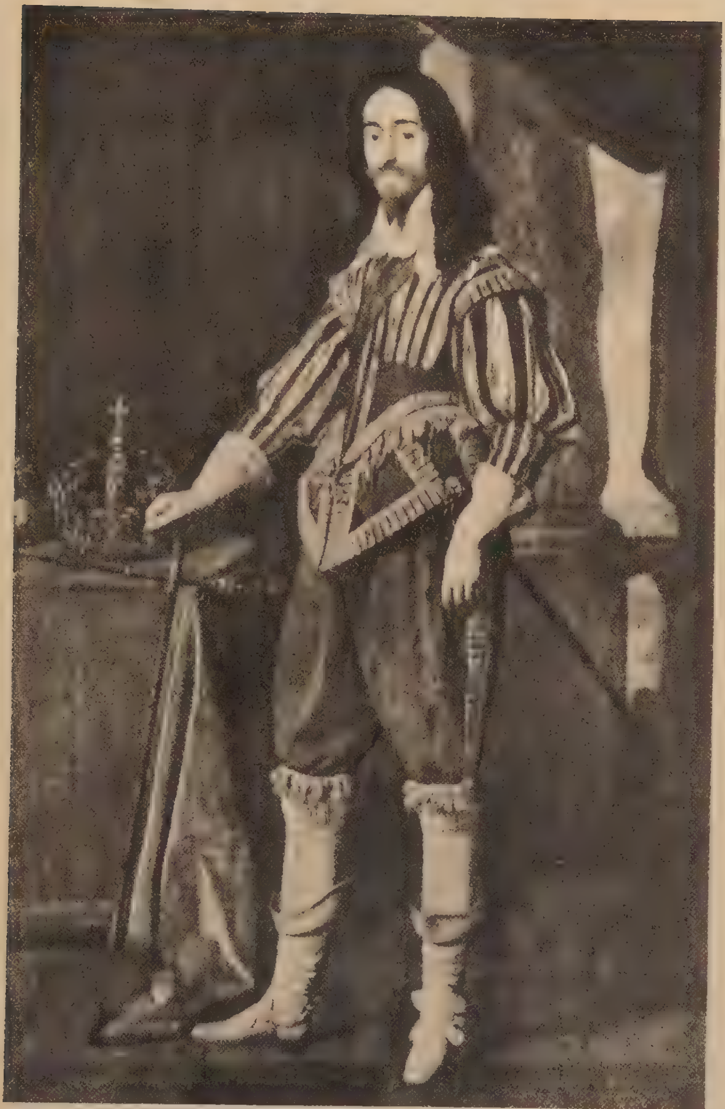
In the contest between ideas, it soon became apparent that handsome Prince Rupert's courage, military skill, honesty and even victories were only putting off evil days of reckoning. Force did not seem to be a convincing argument. Charles and James, riding with their father to battle, saw the rabble of a Parliamentary army driven from more than one field, but the victors got no nearer to London.

The boys were at Edgehill together, quite far back, but not out of range of cannon balls. These fell thickly upon the little eminence where they sat watching the battle while the man entrusted with their safety calmly read a book. This man was Dr. Harvey, who had discovered that the blood so freely poured out in the fields below normally circulated through the human body. The brothers never saw him again. He was deemed unfit to watch over such valuable lives, and men more awake to danger led the Princes back from their exposed position.

It was an exciting time for the lads, and they enjoyed it, a happy pair in the midst of gloom. An air of profound discouragement hung heavily over the royal court. Not even Rupert's magnificent cavalry charges, before which the screaming roundheads fled in terror, could lift it. Gaming and gayety and love could not dispel it. The most devious royal schemes recoiled impotently upon their maker. The royal army won battles that would have ended any other war. But King Charles could not follow them up as he would have triumphed over a foreign foe. He beat them, but the silly rebels were not convinced of the justice of his cause. They did not learn to love him because he chastised them, and he was fighting to make them love him. He could only attempt to win them with promises and terrorize them with threats, a hopeless business. They discovered from intercepted letters that he did not mean to keep his promises, and his threats they did not fear.

He was always in desperate straits for money, borrowing from anyone and everyone. His cavaliers remained as fanatical in loyalty as his foes in rebellion. The silver plate, jewels and ornaments of a thousand mansions were poured into the royal coffers. Gentlemen ruined themselves to maintain their own bands of soldiers. Queen Henrietta Maria went on begging tours of Europe, embarking on one only two weeks after the birth of her youngest child, Henrietta Anne. The royal court was maintained at Oxford, and the colleges gave lavishly of their riches.

It was not enough. The royal cause lost ground steadily, although the King could not realize it. His letters to his wife, in which were strangely mingled the passionate declarations of love and the cunning expressions of secret diplomacy, remained optimistic. He was constantly assuring his " deare heart " whom he would never see again that he had plans which, this time, could not fail. But they always did.



Charles I

"A good man but a bad King."

* * *

At last it became necessary to part with his eldest son —" unboy him," the King expressed it. The worthless victories were not as constant now — only Prince Rupert, remained successful — and it would not do to peril both King and Prince at one time. Also, his Majesty felt, the presence of the heir to the throne could not but encourage loyalists in the West. So at the age of fourteen Prince Charles rode off towards Bristol with a commission to rule the country in his father's name and command all the armies he might find there.

Of course no youth of fourteen, not even one upon whom the divine aura of royalty rested, was given a free hand. Everything would be done in his name, but he was told to act only upon the advice of a council which his father selected for him. Despite the check upon his authority and the discomforts of his journey — it was early March and a cold rain poured down upon the party all day — the youthful leader was in excellent spirits. His lords were around him; three hundred horsemen followed; he indulged in bright boyish dreams of conquest and glory.

Disillusionment was not long in coming. His council shared the passionate loyalty of their class, but hardly any two of them could ever agree on a plan of action. At the head of the list in rank, but at the foot in ability and understanding, was the pompous Earl of Berkshire, who had recently replaced Hertford as the Prince's Governor. Next in importance was Sir Edward Hyde, Chancellor of the Exchequer, sagely moderate in counsel, very fat in person and, although only thirty-seven, such a chronic sufferer from gout that he was forced to make the journey to Bristol in a coach. Many years later he drew his own character, modestly in the third person and with rare discernment, saying of himself:

"He had ambition enough to keep him from being satisfied with his own Condition. He indulged his Palate very much. He had a Fancy sharp and luxuriant, but so carefully cultivated and strictly guarded that he never was heard to speak a loose or prophane word. He was in his Nature inclined to Pride and Passion and to a Humour between Wrangling and Disputing, very troublesome, which good Company in a short time so much reformed and mastered that no Man was more affable and courteous to all kinds of persons. That which supported and rendered him generally acceptable was his Generosity (for he had too much a contempt of Money). His Integrity was ever without Blemish, and believed to be above Temptation."

In addition he had a passion for business, a love of authority, more than usual far-sightedness, a great devotion to the Church of England, strong moral principles and a pedagogic manner. The Lords Capel, Hopton, and Culpepper and the Bishops of Armagh and Salisbury completed the council. None of the three noblemen was on friendly terms with another, and the whole group had apparently been gathered together that they might check each other. They performed this function so well that they hardly ever reached a decision, no matter how pressing the emergency.

Another blow to Charles' hope of glory was a letter from his father ordering him never to risk himself by adventuring with the army in the field, but always to remain in strong garrisons. His council was instructed to see that this was done. His martial ardour dashed and his opinion of administrative business lowered by the futile angry sessions of his advisers, the Prince relinquished his dreams. He was not one to be forever cast down by the refusal of fate to play the game his way. He endured with the patience of constitutional laziness the dulness of his existence in a world of dangerous excitement. He managed to maintain an alert, dignified manner as he presided over the bickerings of the council. He rode among the troops and was so gracious as to encourage loyalty. He exercised the power his father had deputed to him by conferring a knighthood upon Captain John Macklin, a gallant seaman who had betrayed his owners by handing over a cargo worth £30,000 to the royal officers at Bristol. He honoured the local gentry by partaking of their hospitality, and he wandered all spring and summer and fall from garrison to garrison as the victorious Parliamentarians pushed forward.

The war was going badly everywhere. Even Rupert's cavalry was no longer able to swing the tide of battle. The silent, sullen Member of Parliament, Oliver Cromwell, had organized a force that was more effective than the cavaliers at their best. The " New Model " army as he trained it in patience, fierceness, endurance and the fear of God had all the invincible dash of Rupert's men and far better discipline in following it up, as they proved on the fields of Marston Moor and Naseby. Military victories such as had done the royalists little good were all the Parliament needed to complete its triumph. By Christmas the King was writing to his son that his most important duty now was to keep open a line of retreat against the day when he would need it. The boy already had orders that, even if the alternative were to save his father's life, he was to look to himself.

That time was near. During the winter the Prince's advisers managed to scrape together one more army. It marched, a forlorn hope, against the New Model, while Charles retired to Pendennis, a strong place from which flight would be easy. There he heard of his army's annihilation at Torrington, and the West was lost. Although they expected such news at Pendennis, all was confusion. Men said the victorious General Fairfax was almost upon them; there were rumours that traitors in the garrison were prepared to sell their Prince to the roundheads. No one knew where to fly. At last, as Fairfax was indeed almost within sight, Charles and a few immediate followers slipped out of the castle by night and sailed for St. Mary's in the Scilly Islands, leaving the garrison to make what resistance it could. It was almost a year to the day since he had ridden out of Oxford with such high ideals of winning all England for the Stuarts.

As soon as he reached St. Mary's, he could see the impossibility of remaining long. The place had neither food nor means of defence. His attendants were very unhappy, but they lingered on for weeks unable to agree on another refuge. At last they decided for Jersey. George Carteret, the royal governor, had held the island without help through all the years of war. He had written Prince Charles only a few months before that he could provide a safe retreat. Charles had replied with gracious messages, a patent of knighthood and thirteen splendid war horses, a noble gift, but he could no longer afford to feed the animals himself.

Once the decision was made, the refugees were not long in leaving the discomforts of St. Mary's. They were again fearful of betrayal. The Houses of Parliament had written honeyed messages urging the Prince to place himself in their hands. It was Hyde who drafted the polite answer in which Charles expressed his desire to be with them and secure the blessings of peace and their advice. But it was, unfortunately, not just at the moment expedient, and with cordial thanks he was declining their no doubt well meant invitation. However, the Parliamentary letters were followed by a Parliamentary fleet. The court at St. Mary's was in a sad state of alarm, but a providential storm dispersed the threatening ships, and the royalists were off as soon as the wind permitted.

In the novelty of a real sea voyage, Charles was able to console himself for the year of failure. He forgot defeat and disappointment in studying the mechanics of the frigate on which he was travelling, a twenty-four-gun vessel rejoicing in the name of Proud Black Eagle. He took the wheel for hours at a time and learned a good many new nautical terms. But he was the only cheerful soul aboard, nor were the two smaller ships that escorted him any more happily manned. The entire company, some three hundred men of all ranks, wore the look of defeat as they came into harbour at Jersey. The island, loyal as it was, welcomed them in their own mood. No bells rang, no guns boomed salute, no cheers came from the little crowd on shore. Every Jerseyite knew his Prince came here only because there was no better refuge in the British Isles. His presence was mournful testimony to the ruin of their hopes.

By next day, however, they had recovered their manners. They lit bonfires, listened to speeches, crowded around to kiss the princely hand. They made such arrangements as the island could afford for the support of royalty in a proper manner. No man was permitted to bring any produce to market without giving the court first choice. Elizabeth Castle was equipped for Charles with all the finest furniture of Jersey. Neighbouring houses were appropriated for those of his suite who could not find accommodations in the Castle.

Nevertheless the youth was bored. He inspected the defences of the island, suggested improvements and received the plaudits of the multitude. He reviewed the militia and scattered a little money among the soldiers. He watched the workings of a new mint. He conferred honours upon leading citizens, made a few knights, gave Governor Carteret a baronetcy. He was regular and devout in church attendance. He gratified the populace by permitting them to see him dine in state. Seated all by himself at table, his hat on his head, a cloud of courtiers standing with bared heads around him, he solemnly washed his hands, inspected dishes and nodded his approval. Each course was duly presented, carved, tested by the court taster and set before the Prince. Every mouthful was watched to its destination by a thousand eyes. Every sip of wine was taken to the accompaniment of appropriate ceremonies with a page holding a basin under the royal chin. A meal might last in this way by the hour. It was royalty's burden and Charles accepted it as inevitable.

The compensating pleasures of the place were few. Charles acquired a swift pinnace and loved to sail her. He became quite expert in her management, and from his crew he learned much of navigation, the manners of sailors and the methods of naval warfare. He learned too where his host got the money to keep up Jersey's defences and support the retinue of his penniless guest. Sir George was in effect a pirate chief. His vessels preyed largely and profitably upon the ships of merchants who gave their allegiance to the Parliament. He did it in the name of King Charles, which saved his actions from being classed legally as piracy.

Contrasted with such a practical lesson in government, the increasing wrangling of his official advisers was becoming intolerable. The less they had to do the more they considered it. Hyde especially was always positive and domineering. He had developed to a nicety the technique of browbeating his young master, and Charles was afraid of so much knowledge combined with so much rectitude. He never dreamed of protesting when Sir Edward contemptuously snubbed his attempts to take part in council discussions.

From such meetings Charles would flee to his boat or to the more congenial society of Margaret de Carteret, his host's kinswoman. A handsome girl, several years older than the Prince, she was so far from belittling him that he was credited with being the father of the son to whom she gave birth a few months after Charles' departure. However, it is unlikely that the amour gave him as much pleasure as he was to take in later similar adventures. His awe of the forbidding Hyde and the memory of his father's very correct court led him to conduct the intrigue with more secrecy than was congenial to his open nature, and much more than he ever displayed again in an affair of the heart.

This one was of no long duration, for his time in Jersey was growing short. The King, for whom armed resistance to Parliament was no longer possible, had decided to throw himself upon the mercy of the Scots, who were bound by alliance and a religious covenant to the English rebels. He sought to gain by diplomacy alone what a mixture of force and guile had miserably failed to secure. He felt it necessary to the strength of his argument that the only one of his sons who was not in the power of Parliament should remain free of all the possible dangers of captivity. James was sharing his own fate. Prince Harry was with his sister Elizabeth in the care of roundheads.

Consequently the King had written that the Prince was to cross over to France and join his mother in Paris.

Henrietta Maria wanted him to come at once. But Hyde was eloquent for delay. He thought the heir to the throne should not lightly leave his own domains. He was afraid of French influence. He did not trust the Queen, and he suspected that efforts would be made to seduce his charge from the religion of England, although the King had strictly enjoined his wife:

"I desire as thou lovest me first that thou wouldst not endeavour to alter him in religion, nor so much trouble him upon that point. Next, that thou would not thyself, nor suffer him to be engaged in any treaty of marriage without having my approbation."

A few months later, with perhaps a foreboding of what the gods had in store for him, he wrote:

"And although the worst should come, yet I conjure thee to turn thy grief into a just revenge upon mine enemies and the repossessing of Pr. Charles into his just inheritances."

With his mother quoting these orders to him, adding her own and holding out an enticing picture of how good a time he would have in Paris, how much he could do in organizing help for the King, how joyfully he would be welcomed by his kinsfolk, Charles was anxious to be off. But the council did not move so rapidly. All one day he sat in silence while the lords argued just what was his filial duty. When they took it up again next day, the Prince ventured to suggest that his duty was plain since both King and Queen peremptorily ordered him to France. The councillors were silent while he spoke, but quickly resumed their discussion as if they had not heard him. He showed no resentment, but when at last they finished their talk and voted five to one that he should stay in Jersey, he exercised his royal commission for the first time in his life.

With unexpected firmness he braved the men who had been accustomed to order him about. He announced flatly that he would leave as soon as the boats could be got ready, and for once Hyde had to acquiesce.

A few days later Prince Charles, just a month past his sixteenth birthday, sat in the cushioned sternsheets of his pinnace and steered for the dimly seen coast of France where kings still ruled, where politeness and play were encouraged, where men were not serious all the time, where he would take an honoured place as Prince of Wales and grandson of Henri le Grand. He was almost aflame with enthusiasm as the graceful little craft danced him over the water to exile.

Five

THE depths of disappointment that awaited Charles in France can only be measured by the insubstantial, visionary heights from which he fell. He had dreamed of achieving everything that youth considers desirable. Instead, every enthusiasm evaporated in the arid air of the indifference with which he was received. Every hope of action was thwarted by the dependence of his position.

No one would ever have guessed as he rode across France that here passed a grandson of the great Henry and the heir to a kingdom. But anyone would have known when he reached Paris that here was a poor relation, and one likely to prove unwelcome. His mother, it is true, greeted him with affection, but nowhere was there any trace of the homage, the assistance or the rich life which she had promised him. From the very beginning he was made to taste the bitterness of exile. The French in their hard, clear-sighted, unsentimental manner could not see that the young refugee from a lost war was of any value to them, and their charity was sufficiently needed at home.

Charles was given a few rooms of his mother's apartments at the Louvre, but not nearly enough for his servants, who were obliged to lodge miserably in the town. He saw none of France's great men, for the court was at

Fontainebleau, and he could not attend until the details of his reception were fixed. For six weeks he remained alone and neglected while French dignitaries considered whether he took precedence of the King's infant brother, whether he or the Duc d'Orleans should advance more rapidly into a room, whether he sat or stood in the King's presence, when he might keep his hat on his head and when he should hold it in his hand, to whom he should nod and to whom he should bow.

It is easy to believe that by the time these troublesome matters had been settled and memorized, the edge was taken off the joy of a court appearance. Charles went through it with no illusions as to its meaning. In a new suit (not paid for) he came into the presence of His Most Christian Majesty, Louis XIV. He saw a rather good looking child of eight, who received him politely but with the detachment of one repeating by rote an imperfectly comprehended lesson. Charles, who was unable to speak a word of French, replied with courteous dignity in English, a language of which his little cousin was quite ignorant.

Fortunately the audience did not have to last long, but it gave one interested spectator the opportunity to observe that the Prince was " big enough for his age, good-looking head, black hair, dark complexion and passably good-looking." The author of this comment was Mlle. de Montpensier, daughter of Monsieur, the Duc d'Orleans. She was, therefore, cousin to both Louis and Charles. An offensively proud girl of nineteen with an enormous opinion of her own intelligence, beauty and deserts, all of which were really moderate, she was, thanks to her mother, the richest heiress in France. She was generally called simply " La Grande Mademoiselle " and rejoiced in the title.

* * *

She had particular reasons for being interested in the newcomer at court. Henrietta Maria, quite ignoring her husband's plea concerning marriage contracts, had urged upon her niece the desirability of Charles as a bridegroom. The intriguing mother believed such a match would bind France to the Stuarts, and she knew that the four duchies, the seigneurie, the palaces and the 120,000,000 francs which were the girl's marriage portion would be very welcome in restoring the shattered finances of the lost cause. For years the Queen wasted on this idea powers of persuasion worthy of better prospects of success. For there was little likelihood that the French Government would allow Mademoiselle's desirable person and all that went with it to marry abroad unless some very substantial offers were made in return, offers which the exiles were in no position to propose.

The English Queen reported to the girl that Charles, who was three years younger than she to the day, had fallen madly, devotedly in love with her charms, that he talked of nothing else, that he could take no part in the conduct of his affairs because he thought only of her. As a matter of fact the Prince took no part in affairs because his mother would not let him. She ruled him with a firmness he did not know how to combat. She brought him papers to sign and would not let him read them. She took advice only from Henry Jermyn, a clever, rather handsome, shallow man, the only one of the exiles who had managed to bring his fortune with him. The Prince was obliged to treat him with great respect and to uncover obsequiously when in his mother's presence. When he protested that she kept the allowance made for his support, she replied it was not becoming a Prince of Wales to be the pensionary of France. She was worse than Hyde.

* * *

However, not even her strong will could make him fall in with her matrimonial plans. He hated to be bothered with the business of wooing and he had, despite his youth, very decided tastes in women. He did not like them to be conceited, to display an attitude of intellectual superiority nor even to be conscious of superiority. He did not like them ceremonious. He did not like them cold or too plainly calculating. He did not like them to be thinkers. Mademoiselle was very obviously all these things to a superlative degree. So when the young woman, interested in the tale of his mad passion, looked for evidences of it, she could see none. She was a little annoyed, and recorded that she could not regard this aloof suitor " as anything more than an object of pity." Anyway she had decided there was only one man worthy of her rank, talents and riches — the Emperor. To the objection that he was already married, she replied serenely:

" The Empress is fat. She will die in child-birth."

The youth she scorned was quite willing to find consolation elsewhere, and although it was observed that he soon picked up enough French to be quite eloquent in making love to less exalted women, he was obstinately dumb in the presence of La Grande Mademoiselle.

In such a life as he was compelled to lead, Charles' laziness again served him well. Instead of wearing himself out in chafing against restraint or attempting futile defiance, he was content to study mathematics with the philosopher Hobbes and listen to the man's atheistic notions, to give an hour a day to his religious mentor, to rig up a chemical laboratory and play at experimenting. In this and in other pursuits he found one of his old playmates from St. James's to help him. George Villiers, second Duke of Buckingham, was three years older than the Prince and knew his way about. He had escaped from England after quite mad adventures, for he possessed many of his father's charming eccentricities. Now, as the Villiers always did when they could find no other mischief, he was taking up debauchery in a serious way. Charles was glad to accompany him. The French thought their conduct contemptible, for the young men did not confine their amusements to their own rank, but the Prince of Wales was not easily affected by the opinion of others.

He could find no better occupation than dissipation even when the news came that his father had fallen into the hands of his bitterest enemies. The Scots in England, with whom the King had taken refuge, were eager to get home to deal with " that perjured villain and excommunicate traytor, James Graham." This man, better known out of Scotland as the Marquis of Montrose, had been accomplishing miracles for the Stuart cause in the Highlands. With a starving little army of wild clansmen backed by a band of Irish regulars, this genius for irregular warfare had almost conquered the country. Every covenanting, canting, rebellious nobleman of Scotland placed the punishment of James Graham above all other vengeful ambitions. Even had it not been for him, there was nothing to keep the Scots in England. The King was helpless; the new masters of the country had signed Scotland's Solemn League and Covenant by which the Kirk's religion was secured; the invaders could hope only for their wages. Parliament sent them the back pay owing to the army, and the Scots quietly marched home, leaving their King to whatever fate his English subjects might consider fitting.

In Paris a howl of protest arose from the refugees. The cavaliers cried that the coward Scots had sold their master for silver. Not since Judas, they declared, had there been such a betrayal. No man of the reviled race, though he be an exile for loyalty to the Stuarts, was safe from the swashbucklers.

Henrietta Maria redoubled her efforts to secure French intervention. But the regent, Anne of Austria, the King's mother, and the wise, cautious Cardinal Mazarin, who exercised so much power that men said he must be the Queen-Mother's lover, were not inclined to chivalry. They saw very clearly where their interests lay, and they did not propose to become embroiled with Cromwell's New Model Army. They expressed their sympathy but explained that they were quite helpless.

They were only a little better than other Frenchmen in that they concealed their contempt for the loudly boastful, touchy, thoughtless men whom the English Queen countenanced. They remarked that fellows of sense and moderation such as Hyde were seldom seen at the Louvre. And the French were not alone in their opinion. When the knightly Montrose was at last driven from Scotland, he was horrified to find his Queen's court in Paris " so lewd and worthless a place." After his years in the wild hills of Scotland where life was hard and men driven to seriousness, the gallant Marquis disapproved of idle vanities. He observed with disapproval that, as one of Henrietta Maria's ladies remarked, " her temperament inclined her to gayety, and even amid her tears if it occurred to her to say something amusing she would stop them to divert the company." He held aloof from the other royalists, a conspicuous, much admired, lonely figure. He and Prince Rupert were for a time the heroes of Paris, but they were shy of being pointed out by the curious as the most valiant ornaments of a beaten party. Montrose went into retirement, but Rupert braved it out — he had fought losing battles before — and was seen at various formal functions acting as interpreter between his cousin and La Grande Mademoiselle.

Charles' only break in the monotony of these months as a despised hanger-on at the French court was furnished by brother James. That young man, wearying of confinement in Carisbrook Castle with his little brother and sister, managed to escape, disguised in women's clothes, with the aid of a couple of adventuresome followers. He had made a pretty girl, had behaved himself with great discretion, and he had the true princely bearing. Paris was quite taken with this young Duke of York and petted him as she had never thought of petting his brother. James was very fond of the French capital, but for Charles it was a dull time.

Then after two years of this lazy, aimlessly dissolute existence came another chance of realizing youthful dreams. Charles promptly rose to meet the opportunity. In the spring of 1648 a section of the Parliamentary fleet, long unpaid and badly fed, raised the royal standard, made for The Hague and notified the Prince of Wales they were at his service. He emerged from his shell of indifference; he cast off the idle attitude; he urged on preparations for a journey. Confidence returned to him. This time he would be on his own responsibility. There would be no council to talk away every chance of action, no one to tell him he must take care of himself, no one to countermand his orders.

With Rupert, James and a merry band of cavaliers he posted into Holland. He amazed his attendants by his high spirits and his energy. He enlisted his sister Mary and her husband, Prince William of Orange, in his service. The child marriage had turned out unusually well, and William was only too glad to help his wife's brother. Other friends contributed money to provision the ships. The sympathetic

Dutch authorities refused to allow a Parliamentary fleet to attack the unprepared royalists in Dutch waters. The Parliamentary admiral's efforts to bribe the royal crew were checked by Rupert, who threw three of the biggest would-be deserters overboard with his own hands and won the hearts of the simple sailors by the exhibition. Charles himself was such a different youth from the bored unpromising person he had been in France that Baron Hatton wrote to a friend:

"Beleeve itt, sir, he is as hopefull for virtue and judgement as you can expect from his yeares and education."

In a short time the little fleet was ready for the adventure of conquering England. Charles himself stood by the helm giving seaman-like orders as the ships moved into the open sea. Ahead of him went a proclamation in which he announced his intention to restore his royal father to his throne, to disband the rebel army, to settle the religion of the country in accordance with the King's most recent promises, and to make England happy once more. He graciously conceded an act of oblivion which would cover all past offences.

Bravely he ranged the Channel, seeking the Parliamentary fleet and causing alarmist rumours to run along the east coast of England. But he was not strong enough to attempt a landing and the Earl of Warwick, who commanded for the rebels at sea, would not risk a battle. Numerically he was little stronger than the Prince, and he doubted the loyalty of his crews, so he prudently lurked within easy distance of safe harbours. Once indeed Charles almost caught him in a position which would force a fight. Decks were cleared for action, the Prince indignantly refused to withdraw from his exposed quarter deck, rum was served. But there was not the faintest whisper of a breeze. Immovably becalmed the two fleets rested on an unrippled sea within a couple of miles of each other, unable to come to grips. When the wind finally rose, it was dark and Warwick drew off safely in the night.

There was nothing left for Charles but to assert his command of the Channel. He did it by capturing many a London merchant vessel, and signalling defiance to the enemy. When autumn storms and a shortage of beer put an end to the naval manoeuvres of the year, the royal fleet came back to Holland with some £120,000 worth of prizes. The sailors were jubilant, reckoning their share of the prize money, and from men of rank to the meanest hand they were furious when they found there would be nothing for them but their pay, and not all of that. Their Prince had not yet come to regard himself as an adventurer who could ruthlessly spoil his enemies. He looked forward to the day when Englishmen would acknowledge their errors, and he had no wish to delay the happy event by any unpleasantness about money. He permitted the owners of his captures to redeem them for a " loan " of £12,000, and that was not enough for the debts contracted in fitting out the fleet.

Charles missed most of the murmurings against this action. He was too much occupied with the charms of one of the English refugees he found at The Hague. Lucy Walter was, in the words of the ubiquitous Mr. Evelyn, " a brown, beautiful, bold but insipid creature " who suited the Prince's taste exactly. She had been initiated into the ways of the world in London where Algernon Sidney, a much respected Parliamentary officer, had given fifty gold pieces for her favours. He lost his money, being ordered with his regiment out of the capital before he could enjoy them, and Lucy went to Holland. Colonel

Robert Sidney, the rebel's brother, took her into his protection and kept her until the Prince's eye was attracted. Whereupon the loyal Colonel gracefully relinquished the lady, who now set herself up as a woman of some fashion and adopted the name of Barlow.

Shortly after making her acquaintance, her new lover fell ill of smallpox and for a month was confined to bed. Before he was able to go abroad, he was receiving from his father letters in which the King recognized at last his own hopeless condition. The older man, from the impartially remote vantage point of calm despair, gave his successor the benefit of his experiences. He advised justice, peace, probity, altruism, mercy, all the virtues. And he summed it up, saying: —

"I would rather you should be Charles le bon than le grand, good rather than great. I hope God hath designed you to be both."

Interspersed with these admonitions on kingly duties were words of more genuinely paternal affection.

"You are the son of our love," he wrote, for in his heart conjugal devotion was inextricably entangled with royal stubbornness, and both were manifested in all his epistles.

Within a month after receiving the last of these missives, the convalescent youth at The Hague heard that the rebels had formed what they presumed to call a High Court of Justice, and that they had hailed the King before it to answer a charge of high treason. Still weak from his illness, the Prince hurried before the States General of Holland. He pleaded with the grave burghers, through an interpreter, to use the influence of a republic with these hard-hearted republicans in England, and was rewarded with an assurance that the States would send an embassy to remonstrate. Then he returned to his lodgings to attempt some intervention on his own account.

When the Dutch ambassadors, carefully instructed to use persuasion but no threats in their efforts to save the King, sailed for London in the first days of 1649, they were accompanied by a messenger from the Prince of Wales. All his life Charles had an instinct towards simplicity, and this first state paper drawn up on his own initiative was very short. It announced tersely that his Highness would grant the existing government of England any terms they pleased in return for his father's life. As earnest of his good faith he enclosed a blank sheet of paper on which they could write any contract they liked, and at the bottom he placed his seal and his sprawling signature, "Charles, P."

The new rulers of England listened politely to the Dutch envoys, but they did not even condescend to open the Prince's letter. It was pushed aside among unimportant state papers to be forgotten, and a few days later King Charles the First stepped onto a scaffold at Whitehall to show London that the Stuarts had not lost the art of dying.

Six

THE results of the Dutch Embassy and of the Prince's own letter were not known in Holland until a messenger fell on his knees before Charles and addressed him as " Your Majesty." The young man could hardly believe it. The whole world, as he had been brought up to look upon it, was tottering. With genuine despair he asked what stability could remain in a nation which would deliberately, in cold blood, without repenting, murder the King whom God had set over it.

No one he met could answer that question. All about him he saw men visibly shaken by the shock of regicide. The exiles could not find words to express their horror. The catastrophe was something outside the scope of their imagination. They could only vow vengeance, pray God to punish the inhuman monsters, ask why the Heavens did not fall. The martial Montrose, with a versatility typical of the cavaliers, burst into threatening verse and assured his dead master

> I'll sing thine obsequies with trumpet sounds
> And write thine epitaph in blood and wounds.

Every Prince, Duke and King in Europe was frankly appalled by the enormity of the crime. They all hastened to offer their condolences to the new monarch, and even the republican Dutch hastened to give him his full titles. Their preachers thundered sermons against their English brothers.

Within the exile's titular domains there was a burst of activity on his behalf. In England the secret royalist presses poured forth broadsides proclaiming "Charles the Second by the grace of God King of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith." Scotland, outraged that mere Englishmen should have dared to kill a Scottish King, proclaimed the new ruler with all due form and ceremony. Most of Ireland still submitted to the authority of the loyal Lord Lieutenant, the Marquis of Ormonde, and here too Charles was recognized. Jersey, proud of its independence and its personal acquaintance with its lord, celebrated his accession with genuine enthusiasm.

Charles himself felt for a moment that he had lost the person dearest to him in all the world. He had his full share of that stubborn Stuart family loyalty and he had known the dead man only in his most charming moods. But he had no time to nurse his grief, and at his side was the sagacious, practical, urgent Hyde. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, having no exchequer to administer, took all the other departments of state into his plump hands. He drafted letters, suggested plans, recommended men who could be trusted. Under his guidance Charles plunged into the business of Kingship. Hyde found him harder to control than when he had been Prince, for he was nearly nineteen and would take peremptory orders from no one. He even declared his independence of his mother, creating members of the Privy Council without a word to her, although she wrote him to do nothing until he had consulted her.

He recognized as well as any of his advisers that he must take immediate advantage of the fury of indignation which the execution at Whitehall had aroused. The royal cause now had a martyr whose faults were all forgotten, whose virtues were being exaggerated and multiplied, whose memory should be as a sword and buckler to the faithful. The time had come to strike down these mad usurpers in England, but from where should the blow be delivered? There were months of debate in that question.

First was the plan for using the royalist fleet for a direct descent upon England, relying upon loyal men to rise in support. But that was soon ruled out. The fleet, partly dismantled and poorly manned, was now no match for the improved Parliamentary force at sea. Nor could hastily gathered countrymen hope to prevail, even with right on their side, against Cromwell's grim soldiers.

Two other plans were at hand, and each had merits. The one which both Charles and Hyde favoured was for the King to go into Ireland, consolidate Ormonde's hold on the country by granting Catholics the free exercise of their religion and then raise an army for the invasion of England. The latest despatches from the Lord Lieutenant indicated fair chances of success. The program had the added merit of being at once practicable. As soon as the King could raise some money, munitions and possibly a few thousand recruits on the Continent, Ireland would be ready to receive him.

The alternative to this plan was not so simple, for it involved going to Scotland. The northern kingdom too offered immediate safety and the prospect of an army for the conquest of England. But no royalist could forget that these same Scots had thrown Charles the First to his murderers, and they were still stiff-necked enough to insist on conditions before they received their acknowledged ruler. The fixing of these conditions and the guarantees which both parties would want was obviously a matter for protracted negotiations, and time was precious.

A bewildering few months followed. The new King had become an object of considerable importance to all sorts of people, and they came rushing to The Hague to persuade him to make their fortunes. Hyde was indispensable, standing between his master and the most inconvenient visitors, handling an enormous mass of complicated business most competently. But enough trickled through to keep Charles perplexed and busy. From Scotland came leaders of every sort, all outraged to find the faithful Montrose a highly respected member of the court. The first act of a committee representing the Kirk of Scotland was to rebuke their King for his sins. They assured him God would never forgive him if he gave the Irish "a full liberty of their abominable idolatry" or if he continued to countenance "that fugatious man and most justly excommunicate rebell, James Graham." Charles replied by confirming his father's old patent creating Montrose viceroy of Scotland.

Equally high-spoken was the committee from the Scot Parliament, which Charles received in his bedroom so as not to recognize publicly the authority of a legislature which met without a royal warrant. The committee demanded that Charles become a Presbyterian and bring with him, at most, one hundred followers, none of whom should ever have borne arms for his father. If he consented to these, the spokesmen said, the committee was ready to discuss further conditions for his reception in Scotland. Then there was a personal representative of the Marquis of Argyll. This clever, sly and ambitious man was strong, not alone in being chief of the powerful clan of Campbell, but in possessing the confidence of a suspicious, not easily pleased Kirk. However, he had his enemies, and they too hastened to The Hague. All of them were favourably impressed, and excellent reports of Charles' character went back to Scotland.

"His Majesty," wrote one set of envoys, "is of a very sweet and courteous disposition. It were all the pities in the world but he were in good company."

"He is," said another, "one of the most gentle, innocent, well-inclined princes, so far as yet appears, that lives in the world; a trim person and of manly carriage; understands pretty well; speaks not much. He might make, by God's blessing, as good a King as Britain saw these hundred years."

For all their praise, Charles decided for Ireland, and as the spring advanced he was forced to make a start. The English Parliament had the poor taste to send as ambassador to Holland one Dorislaus, who had helped to prosecute the royal martyr. Princess Mary protested to the States General that it was an insult to her family to receive such a man, but she was ignored. A few days later a band of royalist bravoes murdered the envoy in his own lodgings. The good burghers of The Hague, proud of their peaceful community, intimated to Charles that he and his court were a disturbing element of whom they would be glad to see the last. With very little more delay, and that due to the difficulty of raising money for the trip, Charles departed.

He had in these exciting days become a father. Lucy Barlow had given birth to a boy, much to the horror of the pious Scotsmen, although it was rumoured his Majesty had actually married the girl. The child was christened James and, with his mother, accompanied Charles on his travels. The King put his heavy baggage aboard ship for Ireland while he himself planned to await Ormonde's latest word in Jersey, ready for a quick journey to any point in his kingdoms. But on the way he stopped in France, despite a fear expressed by one of his councillors that he might be forced to give up his title of King of that country. The Scot commissioners were again horrified. Their King danced and flirted and actually spoke kindly of Catholics. For this time Charles enjoyed the French court. As a King recognized by two realms and with the prospect of regaining a third, he was worth Mazarin's while. He was welcomed, therefore, with the respect due his rank, and with an interest naturally aroused by a young man riding to glory or to death.

He cut such a good figure that when Henrietta Maria reminded La Grande Mademoiselle of his passion for her, the heiress was for a short time favourably inclined. She even thought of marrying the picturesque young King out of hand, throwing her entire fortune into his coffers and replacing Lucy Barlow as the companion of his adventures. She checked the romantic impulse, although observing that he was better looking than when he first courted her. Perhaps, she thought, if his spirit matches his appearances — ? Thus thinking she came face to face with him. He was discoursing in animated French with their cousin, King Louis, concerning horses and dogs. Mademoiselle was a little bored, but boredom turned to disgust when in reply to his mother's questions about his affairs, he said he did not know enough French to discuss them. It was a lie — he had learned that whatever he told the Queen was published in the next issue of the English news sheets — but Mademoiselle believed him. At that moment she knew she could not marry him. She did not need to wait for the added repugnance of seeing him eat that evening. She had a delicate taste and was grossly offended by the enthusiasm with which he tackled both beef and mutton. He took his leave of her stiffly after dinner, saying in awkward French:

" I believe M. Jermyn, who speaks better than I, will be able to explain to you my intentions and my desires. I am your very obedient servant."

Whatever Jermyn may have been able to explain, the reply he received was chilly. Their next meeting did nothing to improve the girl's opinion of her suitor. His mother had mentioned some current gossip, and Charles remarked primly that he did not understand how a happily married man could want to keep a mistress. If he himself had a pleasant wife, he declared, he would never so insult her. Mademoiselle carried into an extremely advanced old age the conviction that the King of England had been an exceedingly affected young man.

He was always glad to leave her for the society of Lucy Barlow or some other woman of more congenial temperament. But although Puritans were amazed at the corruption of his moral life, he had comparatively little time for gallantry or dissipation. Men had to be enlisted for the great adventure, foreign princes approached for aid, embassies appointed, officers commissioned for mythical armies. English royalists must be received privately and encouraged to hold themselves ready to throw off the republican yoke. An enormous mass of papers must be read bearing on the art of governing England, still a rather academic subject, but Hyde drove him to it like a school teacher.

Above all, money must be raised. There were formal appeals for loans to all governments, but the great reliance was upon the English royalists who still retained some portion of their estates. Generations of gentle families carefully treasured up gracious letters written in the King's own hand and following this form:

"I have so good a testimony of your affection to the King my deare Father of blessed memory, that I desire you on this great occasion to lend me five hundred pounds, whereof I promise You on my royall word very faithfull repayment."

He was so diligent that he quite won the lasting devotion of men who were usually devoted to nothing but the work of their offices. Such a one was his father's old Secretary of State, Sir Edward Nicholas, Hyde's friend, and like the Chancellor a sober, industrious, grave person who had forgotten whatever follies he may have enjoyed in his youth. Writing to Ormonde this respectable gentleman took occasion to report:

"I assure your Excellency His Majesty hath a very good insight already into businesses, and when he is well settled in a good resolution is not easy to be altered. He is a great observer of those that are real in his employments, and though he use graciously all men, yet he makes good distinction between such as have proved themselves perfectly hearty to his just cause and those who have been half-hearted or neuters."

At last all possible preparations were made. Accompanied by James, the Privy Council, a few other lords and what contemporary chroniclers considered "a small train" of some three hundred followers, the King set off for Jersey. There were only six coaches and sixty saddle horses in the party so most of the servants and even a few gentlemen had to march to the coast on foot. But just before he left Paris, Charles gave a royal show by convening the Order of the Garter to confer the honour upon Ormonde, the young Duke of Buckingham and Edward, Prince Palatine, Rupert's brother. Rupert himself was not present. He had gone with another brother, Maurice, to see what harm he could do to British commerce with the royalist fleet.

It was mid-September when Charles set foot on land that acknowledged him as King, and a month later he sent a proclamation calling " the Kingdome of England and Dominion of Wales " to return to their obedience. But it was only a gesture, made to keep his courage up. For the fair plan of Ireland was shattered. Ireland herself, Ormonde reported, was lost. The fiend Cromwell had marched from victory to victory, subduing the island as it had never been subdued before and placing upon the miserable Catholic population such a rigid Puritan yoke as would keep their noses in the mud for generations.

Many loyal men in the sad little court at Jersey frankly despaired. But Charles was still resilient, still optimistic. Hard on the heels of news of the Irish disaster came new commissioners from Scotland, austerely disapproving of his Majesty's religion, friends, family, principles and mode of life but quite anxious to use him as a standard around which they could rally their countrymen. The King decided to deal with them. From the very first moment of discussion, however, the air was full of insults, threats and recriminations. The cavaliers and Presbyterians nearly came to blows. But Charles was learning the technique of handling debate. He wanted action, and he knew that in Scotland was his only immediate chance of getting it. So he flattered and commanded, soothed and persuaded to such purpose that the first Lord Byron of Newstead Abbey described the scene to a friend:

" During this the King expressed such moderation, patience and judgment as was admirable in a person of his years, repressing by his excellent temper those heats and animosities amongst us which otherwise would utterly have destroyed the business."

With all his pains, he could only secure an agreement to meet again. Nothing could be done in Scotland in the winter anyway, and Charles promised to meet the Scots on March fifteenth at Breda, a pleasant little Dutch town belonging to the Prince of Orange, where he would satisfy all their just demands. There was nothing to do in the meantime but wait, and Charles was good at that. He hunted; he visited the Jersey gentry at their homes; he wrote letters to many royalists assuring them that he would never prejudice their interests; he spent long evenings in song and chatter. And he devised a plan for keeping Hyde, whom the Scots abhorred as a high Churchman, from endangering the future negotiations. These, he knew, would be a game of lies, and Hyde was neither subtle enough nor dishonest enough to play it. Charles determined to send him on an embassy to Spain where he might solicit financial and diplomatic assistance.

Early in 1650, the English commonwealth began to turn its attention to this young man. The Parliamentarians did not deny his title to Scotland — they usually gave it to him when they had reason to mention his name — and they looked upon him as an enemy to be reckoned with. From the moment he left Jersey in February, their spies were with him. It was easy to find corruptible and loose-tongued men among the penniless members of his court. From time to time zealous Puritans attached themselves to Charles for the pleasure of being shocked by his conduct and reporting it to London. To men who regarded a smile or a courteous salute as sinful, the young King and his gay adventurers were lost souls, as lost as the Papist court of Henrietta Maria. A Puritan correspondent reporting the meeting with the Queen on Charles' return to France added:

"If these be still the counsellours and that the company, a man that is no witch may foretell the issue; the discourses, projections and hopes speake such ridiculous follies and such extream debauchery amongst them, that you will hardly believe the relation."

The King did not linger long in France, and was soon riding for Breda. He stopped at Ghent, and here was given an indication of the world's opinion of his chances. It was the custom for a municipality to consider itself honoured by permission to entertain royalty, but when Charles asked for lodgings, the Ghent officials told him bluntly that there were many inns in the town. Charles put up at the Golden Apple and, furious at the insult, declined to receive any burghers from the offensive commune, although his suite were forgiving enough to accept a handsome gift of wine. They got so roaring drunk on it and were so disorderly that the inn bill came to £180, a sum which the court was able to get together only with great difficulty.

At Breda, however, things were different. The kindly Prince of Orange was a perfect host, and there was room in the King's lodgings for the handsome Betty Killigrew, sister of a cavalier and a buxom beauty of twenty-seven. With her charms and those of Lucy to fortify him, Charles thought he would be well able to deal with the Scots. He was quite wrong. He could only match them in willingness to deceive, but in the actual business of duplicity, the bargaining, the twisting of phrases, the direct lying, no youth of his years stood a chance against the shrewd, cunning, experienced and eminently godly men who represented the Kirk and Parliament of Scotland. For what they so easily did to their young King, some of them later had the grace to be ashamed. Alexander Jaffray, one of the Parliamentary commissioners, admitted in his diary:

"We did sinfully both entangle and engage the nation and ourselves and that poor young prince to whom we were sent, making him sign and swear a covenant which we knew from clear and demonstrable reasons that he hated in his heart. He sinfully complied with what we most sinfully pressed upon him; where I must confess, to my apprehension, our sin was more than his."

With their holier-than-thou attitude, they did more than disgust Charles with the covenant; they disgusted him with the whole Scottish nation. He had not been brought up to renounce the world. He had never believed worldly pleasures were sinful. And he had been well enough grounded in his own religion to defend it against theirs. Naturally he resented the efforts of these "brazen-fac'd rebels and barbarous bruites," as his courtiers called them, to teach him his duty. They told him he was an idolator, his mother a lost woman, his martyred father a breaker of covenants. They told him he must completely disavow the hero Montrose, who even now was on his way to raise the Highlands with Charles' commission in his pocket. They told him he must cut himself off from his ungodly friends. They assured him his own life to date was so full of sin it would take all the rest of his time on earth to earn forgiveness. They insisted that he must not kneel in Church because "it could not but provoke the anger of God and arouse jealousies in the hearts of your subjects." Charles pleaded that he was entitled to tolerance, for he was willing to grant tolerance to others. Such an argument seemed ridiculous to the unbending Scots in whose capital these illustrations of contemporary life were being recorded while they dickered with their King:

* * *

" In the end of this moneth of Maij ane man was brint in Edinburgh for lying with a kow; both he and the kow war brint upon the Castell-hill of Edinburgh."

" An act of the commissoun of the Generall Assemblie wes red in all the Churches of Edinburgh dischargeing promiscuous dansing. And as for adulterie, fornicatioun, incest, bigamie and uther uncleanes and fithynes, it did nevir abound moir nor at this tyme."

The debates at Breda went on for months, Charles yielding bit by bit to all demands. The wisest of his advisers, such old hands as Lord Newcastle, pleaded with him to be an honest man, but he preferred the opinion of Buckingham, who was keen for action, any action. The young Duke's perfect gift of hypocrisy gave him standing with the Scots, who forgave him the dissoluteness of his nights for the seeming repentance of his days and his influence with the King. They promised Buckingham a great career in Scotland. He encouraged Charles in the belief that it would not be necessary to keep all these promises, that the thing was to get power into one's hands. The Prince of Orange, the powerful Duke of Lorraine, the Queen of Sweden said the same. By early summer, he had so far committed himself that not even the fate of Montrose could deter him. The gallant Marquis had been taken almost as soon as he landed in his native country. Charles could not have saved him, but he did not even try, a selfishness which the knightly cavalier did not find surprising in a prince, for almost his last words on the scaffold were:

" For his Majesty now living, never any people, I believe, might be more happy in a King. His commandments to me were most just, and I obeyed them. He deals justly with all men. I pray God he be so dealt withal that he be not betrayed under trust as his father was."

◆

But he did not know his master had actually expressed joy over his defeat and had tacitly consented to the execution. Less than a month after the Edinburgh mob had yelled its delight to see the blood pouring from the severed neck of the Stuarts' best friend, while crowds were still gathering to gloat over the blackening quarters of Montrose, set up by order in four of the largest Scottish towns, the man he had died to serve bound himself by the most solemn of oaths to the executioners.

" I Charles, King of Great Britane, France and Irlande," ran the document to which his signature was affixed, " doe assure and declare by my solemne oath, in the presence of the almightie God the searcher of hearts, my allowance and approbatiouns of the nationall covenant, and of the solemne league and covenant above written; and faithfully oblige myself to prosecut the ends thereof in my station and calling; and that I for myself and successores shall consent and agree to all actes of parliament enjoyning the nationall covenant and the solemne league and covenant, and fullie establishing presbitirall government, the directorie of worshipe, confession of faith and catechismes in the kingdome of Scotland as they ar approven be the generall assemblie of this kirk and parliament of this kingdome; and that I shall give my royall assent to acts of parliament, bills, ordinances past or to be past in the houses of parliament enjoyning the same in the rest of my dominions; and that I shall observe these in my owne practice and familie, and shall never mack opposition to any of these, or endeavour any change thereof."

When the news of this oath was out, friends deserted him in hundreds. His mother wrote indignantly that he had betrayed his father's memory. The sanest cavaliers shook their heads sadly. But the young man did not care for any of that. He had suffered through four years of idle, despised exile waiting to fight for his rights, and now that the chance had come he was utterly reckless of other considerations. The cavalier's code, that shrank from a lie or a betrayal, was not his. He thought there was but one point of honour for a King — to rule.

Seven

THE power of a symbol over an ignorant, simple people is a strange phenomenon, displayed in all its curiosity by the welcome the plain folk of Scotland accorded to King Charles. No man could by force of reason have told of a single positive benefit that might be expected from their ruler's presence. Fortunately the people did not use reason. They employed faith instead, and were confident that now they would see miracles wrought for them. In the illogical manner of those who cling stubbornly to bright illusions, they connected all prosperity with their king; all misery with his enemies.

This idea of royalty was the one spot of color left in the drab horror of Scotland's view of life. The circumstances of their time gave them nothing to look forward to in this world save a miserable poverty. The gloomy religion of their Kirk could do no more than permit them to hope that in the world to come they might not be utterly damned. With the heroic patience of an enduring race, they reconciled themselves to this prospect, but they did not in their hearts condemn their king to the same fate; the symbol of royalty still exercised its mysterious power over their minds.

So, whatever may have been the carefully guarded thoughts of the nobility and the ministers, the common people went into ecstasies of rejoicing when they learned that Charles, miraculously escaping an English fleet in the mists of the Scottish coast, had landed in his ancestral kingdom. Cannon signalized the event. Churches were crowded with the prayerfully inclined. The very market women who had happily watched the execution of Montrose now joyfully contributed their stools and baskets to the bonfires blazing in honour of Montrose's master.

The object of all this exultation was quite cut off from these common folk who alone in Scotland were glad to see him for himself and what he represented. Between the King and the masses stood a watchful, suspicious, greedy, scheming aristocracy and a coldly disapproving ministry. Despite his promises, the Scot leaders with Argyll at their head, never believed in his sincerity. They were uncomfortably aware of how much truth the London scribblers had on their side when they mocked that Charles had accepted the Covenant because it was easy, "requiring nothing but the sacrifice of his honour and conscience." Yet with the persistence of madness, they forced ever more bitter-tasting oaths upon the King. Periodically he humiliated himself at their insistence for his own sins and those of his family. His advisers were never happy unless they could hear him admitting that he was a miserable sinner in the eyes of God and man. Only secretly and with difficulty could he keep in touch with English royalists. He had great hopes that Catholics would join him in large numbers whenever he could lead a Scottish army southwards and to encourage them in their loyalty he wrote to one of the leaders:

"I pray advise them not to be starteld with anything put out here in my name, which I assure you and them are forced and constrained."

Meanwhile he had become virtually a prisoner, and had been so from the first. After his landing he made his way towards Edinburgh, acclaimed enthusiastically by the people, and learned that Cromwell, fresh from Irish triumphs, was marching north with his veterans to put the Scots in their place. The King was eager to lead his men into battle against the great rebel, but hardly had he joined the army than the Scot chieftains withdrew him hurriedly. The soldiers liked him dangerously; they responded to his youthful enthusiasm and cheered him with more fervour than they prayed. Argyll and his friends were not minded to have Charles turn their weapons against them. They forced him to retire to safety and idleness. Then they turned the army over to the most inspired of the Presbyterian divines and awaited the results confidently.

Armies moved slowly, and before they could meet there was ample time for a lively war of pamphlets. The Scot Presbyterians and the English Independents were well matched for such a conflict. Between the piety of Argyll's followers and that of Cromwell's aides there was nothing to choose. Both were unbelievably learned in the Old Testament. The broadsides of the day bristled with intricate references to Achan, David, Ishbosheth, Solomon. Some of the scholars seemed to have dipped lightly into the New Testament too, and on rare occasions their paeans of hatred were launched in the name of Jesus Christ. More often they took their inspiration from the pagan classics, and before he had been in Scotland two months, Charles had been called by the name of every tyrant in Greece or Rome.

While carrying on this congenial struggle, the Scot clergymen were reconstructing their army on Biblical lines. Having disposed of Charles they proceeded to remodel their forces after the example of Gideon who preferred his three hundred staunch men to many thousands of mere fighters. Their army, said the ecclesiastical warriors, was the army of God. Therefore, it would never do for it to contain a single soldier who had not passed all the Kirk's rigorous tests. When they sent their King away, they also dismissed three thousand soldiers and some hundred of the most experienced officers. These latter were replaced by godly civilians who had never seen a battle or watched a review. But they did trust in the Lord to win for them, and that was the principal qualification for a commission in this army.

While the troops were being "purged," in the phraseology of the day, the same process was being applied to Charles' court by the Commission of Estates, the ostensible executive of Scotland but entirely subject to Argyll. One by one all his friends except Buckingham were torn from him or fled to escape impeachment. Some went back to the Continent. A few escaped to the Highlands where the Earl of Middleton was attempting to emulate Montrose among the clansmen. Still others, disgusted with their ruler's hypocrisy, returned to England to make their peace with the Commonwealth. The King was left quite alone among his enemies, for Buckingham had become Argyll's tool and urged only what the Marquis suggested.

A bitter mockery of a court was maintained at Perth. Every outward show of respect was paid the King. All uncovered in his presence and bowed low. No common crowd was permitted to come near him lest they disturb the royal repose — and carry away ideas of serving him. A more than royal guard was kept, and the captain of it was Lord Lorne, Argyll's eldest son. No one could pass the sentinels for speech with the King without Argyll's approval. The Marquis even proposed to cement his hold on his master by giving him as a bride Lady Anne Campbell, his daughter. This last was the only point on which Charles could offer resistance. He derived a certain amusement from spinning the matrimonial negotiations along, never giving the wily Argyll a refusal or grounds for complaint, but never committing himself.

It was almost the only amusement he had. Fast days and Sundays seemed to take up all the time. He was forced to sign another declaration of shame and sorrow for his sins. He had to repeat again and again his allegiance to the Kirk. The only men who had access to him at all times were the ministers of religion. They even invaded his bedroom to exhort him to a better way of life and instruct him in the more subtle windings of their creed. They were the men who were making traditions about the length of Scottish sermons. On one fast day, Charles was compelled to listen to six of them without any intermission, and even the Scot preacher, Gilbert Burnet, records that he himself was "not a little weary" before the end, accustomed though he was to the interminable exhortations of his countrymen. There were no cards, no dancing, no witty conversation, no fun at all. The King could not desecrate the Lord's Day even to the extent of taking a walk; the only secular occupation permitted him was golf. In all this time the nearest approach to tolerance or a recognition of his youth came from the Moderator, Robert Douglas. He had been sent by his fellow ministers to deal sternly with his Majesty, who had been seen by the prying eyes from which he could never escape to commit the heinous sin of kissing a girl. Douglas reproved Charles with proper fervour, but he wound up his lecture by suggesting kindly that in future his Majesty would do well to shut the windows.

Meanwhile Cromwell was trying to manoeuvre the Scots into a battle. But he was opposed by a soldier who had been trained in the Englishman's own ways and on the Continent as well. David Leslie was one of the many Scot soldiers of fortune who came home to serve their native land in the civil wars. He had ridden with Cromwell at Marston Moor, and he knew just how much help the Lord of Hosts would be on such occasions. He did not consider it sufficient to warrant him in risking his men, many of whom had not yet mastered the complicated process of discharging a seventeenth century musket, against the finely disciplined fighting force which had earned on dozens of fields the nickname of " Ironsides."

But if the Scots were not trained for battle, they were wonderful marchers. They covered incredible distances across their rocky, unfriendly country without tiring while the English wore themselves out in the chase. Food was scarce in the English camp, finally fever broke out and by the end of August Cromwell was almost ready to give it up for this year and go home. He decided to make one more effort to out-manoeuvre Leslie. He drove his weary army to Dunbar, but when he got there he found the agile Scots had out-walked him again. Their lines looked down from an impregnable position on a ridge of the Lammermuir hills. It would be suicide to attack even such amateurs in that place.

That night there were counsels of gloom in Dunbar. Nothing remained save to kill the horses, embark the men on ships and retreat. On the ridge above them, the Scots were giving thanks to God for delivering their enemies into their hands. But David Leslie was unhappy. The committee from the Kirk had given him orders to attack in the morning, and much as he feared his old comrade in arms he feared the ministers of religion more. A little after dawn the English could hardly believe their eyes as they saw the Scots come marching down the hill. Cromwell exclaimed that God in his infinite mercy had made them mad. In gratitude he gave as the word for the day " The Lord of Hosts." The Scottish word was " The Covenant."

In an hour the whole thing was over. Cromwell's best lieutenant, George Monk, led a charge of horse and the Scots, seeing that divine thunders did not intervene, scrambled for safety. Few of them reached it. Three thousand were killed before they could get to the hills. Ten thousand more were rounded up for eventual transportation as serfs to colonial plantations. The ships that were to have taken the English army out of Scotland carried the prisoners to England where most of them died of dysentery and starvation before they could be sold. Twenty Englishmen had been killed, and all southern Scotland was in Cromwell's hands. The victorious general was quite content to rest for the winter.

To the north there was tremendous confusion. Ministers of the Kirk cried out that their God had forsaken them, and they were sufficiently conscious of their own rectitude to upbraid Him for allowing His own army to be dispersed. The more extreme of them were inclined rather to blame the King. How, they asked, could God be expected to smile on the cause of such a hypocrite? They said there were too many malignants among them, and they referred to Charles as " the chief malignant." The young man himself was not altogether sorry to see his jailers humiliated. He had to give out another declaration, listing his faults in the usual manner, and then he wrote a slightly malicious letter to the Committee of Estates regretting that their grievous sins had been visited with such dire punishment and hoping the Lord would vouchsafe His help in future enterprises. He was learning the patter.

He was also coming to the conclusion he would have to assert himself. He feared that if he defied his Scotsmen they might turn him over to the English but it was a risk he would have to run.

" The Scots have dealt very ill with me, very ill," he told the one trusty messenger he could find to carry word of his plans to friends abroad.

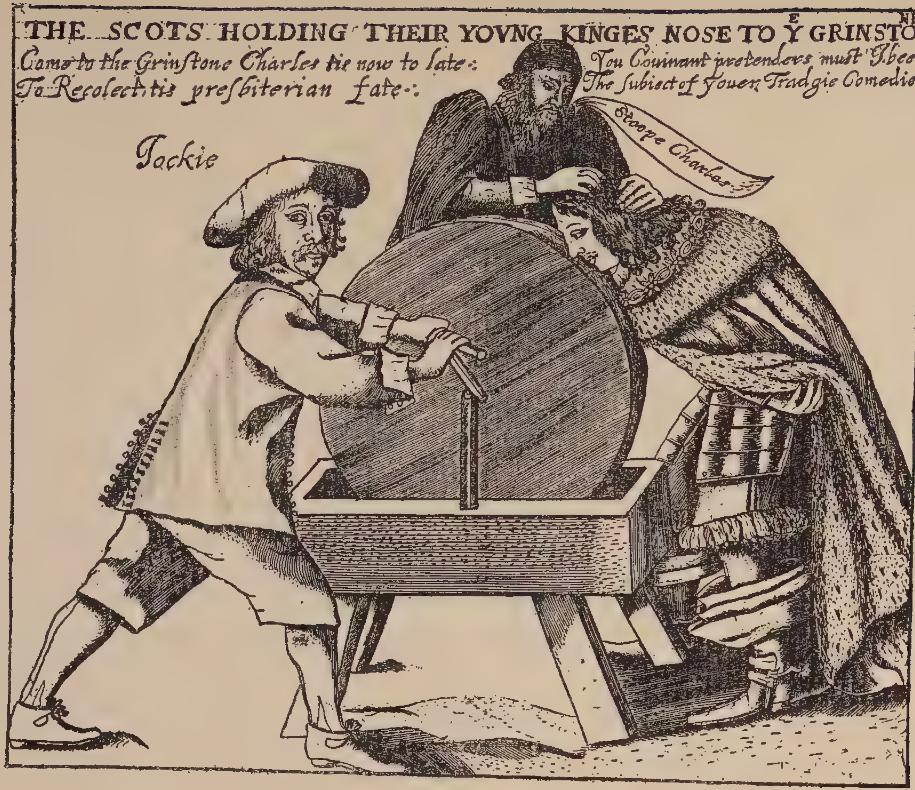
He had decided on an open break. Middleton was a cavalier of the type Charles understood, and the Earl had the nucleus of an army in the Highlands. Charles thought the royal presence might inspire all the clans to rise. Even more successfully than Montrose had done, he would sweep down upon the south. Then he would indeed be King of Scotland and ready to deal with Cromwell. One day, on plea of going hunting, he escaped into the hills with only two attendants. But he had confided in Buckingham, and the friend of his childhood betrayed him to Argyll. The runaway was caught before he had gone forty miles.

However, he had scared the Scots into a semblance of reason. They had nothing to gain by giving him up to the English, and such a course or any other which led to bodily harm to the King might mean their ruin. They knew, although they kept their knowledge from Charles, that the people were still Stuart royalists. Besides they needed him to rally a new army, for the name of the Kirk was no longer enough. Therefore they allowed their King to recall some of his old friends. He was taken into the confidence of the government and sometimes his opinion was regarded. He was promised a formal coronation and the command of an army if he could raise it. There was no protest when he wrote letters to this end and omitted mention of the Lord of Hosts. The letters were successful, and as the year 1650 drew to a close — " the Lord hyding his face all this tyme for the synnes of Scotland," an humble diarist wrote — there were four armies on Scottish soil: the royal army which Leslie was gathering for Charles, " the Holy Army " which had risen for Kirk and covenant in the west, " the malignant army " which Middleton commanded, and Cromwell's New Model.

The promised coronation was set for the first of January, but the Kirk did its best to prevent a festive occasion. On Sunday, December twenty-second, the ministers decreed a day of general humiliation for the country's contempt of the gospel. Christmas, of course, was ostentatiously neglected lest it give rise to heathen rejoicings, but the Kirk made up for it on December twenty-sixth with a special national day of humiliation for the sins of the royal family. His spiritual advisers gave the King such an unusually long list of sins to repent that he murmured:

" I think I must repent too that ever I was born."

The ground thus piously prepared, the coronation ceremonies were held with as much pomp as the Scottish treasury could afford. Robert Douglas, the preacher for whom Charles had the least dislike, opened proceedings with a sermon which moved the dignified young monarch to faint gestures of astonishment, for it was an argument in defence of subjects who resist royal authority and a warning to the new King to avoid the sins of his ancestors. Prayer followed. Then the highest Presbyterian nobles of Scotland invested Charles in royal robes, the sword of state, the spurs and the sceptre. Argyll placed a crown upon his head while Douglas prayed that the emblem of royalty


THE SCOTS HOLDING THEIR YOVNG KINGES NOSE TO Y^E GRINSTO^NE
Come to the Grinſtone Charles tis now to late:
To Recolect. tis presbiterian fate:
You Couinant pretendors must be:
The ſubiect of youer Tradgie Comedie:
Stoope Charles
Jockie

Charles of Scotland as the English Saw Him, 1651

"I think I must repent too that ever I was born."

might be purged of the sins of previous wearers. Puritan scribblers in England thought it extremely funny that the crown was only of gilt. They did not report the little speech the King made from his throne.

" I esteem the affection of my good people more than the crown of many kingdoms," he said with a gravity and decorum much admired by his hearers, " and shall be ready, by God's assistance, to bestow my life in their defence, wishing to live no longer than I may see religion and this kingdom flourish in all happiness."

Another hour of religious exercises concluded the day's events, and Charles was asked for an order which the English news sheets reported thus:

" The King of the Scots desired them to appoint a Fast for his sins. But while they fast for his sins, he repeats them as fast."

Despite his added prestige as a crowned King and the increasing deference paid to his views in secular matters, he was still worried incessantly on the score of religion. He was a skillful mimic and he could assume a manner of ostentatious piety hardly to be distinguished from the real. At such times he could lull the fears even of the wily Argyll, who once remained until three in the morning praying with his King in his bedroom. Together they wept, shouted aloud for divine mercy, beat their breasts remorsefully. But in the light of the next day, doubts of the King's sincerity returned. When Lady Argyll demanded to know what kept the Marquis out so late, he told her the whole edifying episode. Her ladyship opined that his Majesty was shedding crocodile tears, and her lord reluctantly agreed with her.

Between the visits of men anxious about his soul, Charles worked hard to assemble a force that might be some match for Cromwell in the spring. He continued to satisfy the more rigid covenanters whenever a lie would do it; he encouraged Argyll in the marriage negotiations to such an extent that the wedding was reported in Holland; he conciliated every nobleman he could, and was soon so strong in his own right that he could turn upon his religious persecutors with their own weapons. When Argyll objected that he was giving positions of trust to malignants, the King retorted with dignity:

"We are all malignants to God."

But most of his energies were devoted to the army. He rode about the country tirelessly in the search for men. He was never too weary to attend a review or consult with an officer. Leslie found him a much better master than the Kirk, and was getting his men into some sort of discipline, although the English reported with the air of men whistling to keep up their courage:

"Our forces are in no wayes fearfull of them, having their confidence in the God of hosts."

The English were right. The first skirmishes of the spring were all in Cromwell's favour. Charles now rode with his army, but did not change the result, although it was written of him approvingly:

"The K. is certainly very intelligent, industrious and active on all occasions and but too forward to hazard his person in any attempt against the rebels."

By mid-summer there was obviously only one chance of success. This was an invasion of England, for which Cromwell had opened the way by a complicated military manoeuvre which brought him north of the Scots Army. It was the opportunity Charles had come to Scotland to make, and his spirits rose immensely as the decision was taken. He hoped for a rising in England as soon as his army appeared. Then he would turn and crush the pursuing Cromwell. The Scots approved, for whatever happened it would draw the invaders out of Scotland.

Urgent messages went flying into England to loyal cavaliers. But Charles could not know how much these men were cowed, how firmly the Commonwealth kept a grip on the country. Had he read the English news sheets he would have understood better the reluctance of Stuart sympathizers to show themselves boldly, for he would have seen such items as this:

" At a Court of War held at White Hall one Samuel Gardner, Foot soldier in Col. Ingolsbye's Regiment, was condemned to be hanged in Paul's churchyard on Friday after for speaking words of sedition, uproar and mutiny, contrary to the laws of war, in promoting Charles Stuart, advertising the soldiers & people not to fight for the state but for King Charles. Thus he spake & uttered the same divers times while he was whipping thro' the city for a former offence; he is also afterwards to be hanged in chains on Turnham Green for example to others that shall dare to offend in the like kind."

Eight

THE Scottish army proceeded south under the rule of a discipline wonderful to behold. Not even Cromwell's Spartan troops, whose worldly wants were as simple as their heavenly expectations were extravagant, did so little damage to the country through which they passed. Charles kept a stern watch on his men, and the slightest deviation from the path of honesty was severely punished. The King was relying upon England to send her young men in thousands to join his ranks, to contribute her treasure to his needs. He was taking no chances that loyal citizens should be stung from their allegiance by the manners of his Scotsmen, whose reputation south of the border was that of thieves and cut-throats. His measures to insure rectitude were most effective. After he had ordered one soldier shot for stealing apples and another executed for refusing to pay for a pint of beer, excellent order prevailed on the march.

Nevertheless his reception was disappointing. The places through which he passed maintained a careful neutrality, for Cromwell was not far behind, and ten years of civil war had made people chary of expressing decided opinions. In every market town the army paused while King Charles the Second was solemnly proclaimed. Cannon boomed impressively; the bells of the church rang merrily; the soldiery cheered lustily. But the country folk remained sadly apathetic. They did not display any more joy than was absolutely necessary with the eyes of the Scot troopers upon them, and only a few scattering recruits joined the ranks. The one fair-sized royalist contingent that could be raised in the north of England was dispersed by a Puritan regiment and the loyal Earl of Derby, who had commanded against the rebels, escaped almost alone to join the King.

It was no comfort that as he entered England the Parliament in London issued a solemn declaration that Charles Stuart was a traitor to the Commonwealth and would be dealt with accordingly. There was much excitement and not a little fear in the capital, for the only army between Charles and Parliament was Lambert's inadequate force of seven thousand men. Parliament sent out calls for the militia and ordered the declaration read in every town in the country. It was done, however, only in places that were not in the invader's line of march.

The one skirmish that enlivened the August days for the soldiers went in favour of the royalists. At Warrington Lambert attempted to check the royal advance, hoping to delay the Scots until Cromwell could come up. He failed miserably, although he had taken a good position with the river before him. The Scottish foot gallantly constructed a rude bridge of planks in the face of Lambert's fire, and Charles led his cavalry in a successful dash across the stream. The King was among the first in the rush and for a few moments was actually engaged hand to hand with his enemies. Then Lambert called off his out-numbered forces, and withdrew southwards.

The victors had not gained much, for their success encouraged no volunteers. They had only opened the road to

Worcester, and by the time they reached that place a few days after the fight at Warrington, they needed a rest badly. Charles took advantage of the enforced delay to have himself proclaimed with more display than he had hitherto permitted himself. He had his royal declaration read to the townspeople and graciously received the magistrates of Worcester. They were sorry to see him, but made the best of it and with a show of enthusiasm provided such entertainment as the town afforded.

Before the army was ready to resume the march, Cromwell was upon them. Unable to cope with the Scots in the hills, his Ironsides were much the better walkers over flat country. He had never doubted that he would overtake the invaders in plenty of time, nor was he less confident of the result when they met. He had his usual faith in the help of God. Besides, his troops outnumbered the Scots almost two to one since he had effected a junction with Lambert.

It was the anniversary of Dunbar as he moved to the attack. He encouraged himself with the memory of that miraculous victory as he advanced upon the walls of Worcester while he sent Lambert to cross the Severn and assail the city from the other side. Charles came out in person to meet the chief of his foes, leaving Leslie with the reserves and despatching a detachment to hold Lambert at the river. His plans were skillfully laid, but there could be only one outcome. The Scots fought gallantly under the eye of their King and with his example before them, but Cromwell was constantly bringing up fresh men. Leslie with his usual caution refrained from throwing his reserves to certain destruction. The troops sent to check Lambert failed, and came pelting back into the town.

Nevertheless Charles persisted in his forlorn hope. Three times he led his horsemen in desperate charges that drove back regiments of Cromwell's veterans that had never retreated before. But the fourth charge was broken in its turn, and the King was swept back in a mob of fugitives and pursuers through the gates of Worcester. He struggled through the press to his headquarters, cursing Leslie for hanging back and his own men for running away. However, there was no doubt that he was beaten, and while the rival armies exchanged their last blows in the narrow streets, he ordered a retreat.

It was too late even for flight to save most of his army. Only Leslie's unbroken ranks could protect the mad stampede of those who had been in battle. Charles passionately urged these unwearied troops to follow him in one last effort which might rally the beaten regiments and win the day, but the Scots would fight no more. Despairingly Charles rode with them through the one gate that was not yet in the hands of his enemies and galloped northwards in the night.

The road was choked with dusty, ragged, weary men, many of them stained with the drying blood of their wounds. They plodded onwards in the dark, sodden with the exhaustion of a day's hard fighting and that last blind rush for safety. Strangers in a strange land, they knew their chances of eluding Cromwell's horse and the local countrymen were slight, but they tramped hopelessly forward because there was no room in their tired bodies for anything but a faintly smouldering instinct of self-preservation. Patriotism, loyalty, martial ardour, discipline, pride had been drained out of them by the battle and their flight. They were a thoroughly beaten, completely despondent body of men.

They were neither safe nor inspiring companions for a fugitive King. As he rode past them in the night, a close band of his gentlemen around him, he reflected that this sullen rabble which he had led to its destruction was almost as dangerous as any roundheads he would be likely to meet. They would be quite capable of treating him as their fathers had dealt with his. But he could not shake them off just then, and the universal fear of pursuit was so contagious that Charles became more and more alarmed.

" Although I could not get them to stand by me against the enemy," he said years later of Leslie's troopers, " I could not get rid of them now I had a mind to it."

He rode among them with Lord Wilmot at his side, and to this loyal cavalier he confided his plan. He would give this beaten remnant of an army the slip, for it was no part of his creed that a King should die with his followers out of a mistaken notion that he owed them loyalty. Once clear of his friends, he would make for London in disguise. He might, he thought, be able to out-ride the news of his defeat. In the capital he would perhaps be able to find secure hiding places until he could be smuggled away to the Continent.

A few minutes later he found an opportunity for avoiding the fate of his army. The soldiers were keeping the straight road for Scotland, and in the darkness their King succeeded in turning off undetected into a side road. Some sixty gentlemen, including Buckingham, Wilmot, the Earl of Derby and the Earl of Lauderdale, were with him. They covered twenty miles that night and at dawn, nearly ready to drop with exhaustion, they reached a pleasantly secluded country house, Whiteladies, the residence of a Catholic royalist who had fought bravely at Worcester and had guided the little party to this retreat. Here they refreshed themselves with bread and cheese and discussed possibilities of escape. It was obviously impossible now to out-ride news of the battle to London, for Cromwell's messengers would have had the whole night and twenty miles' start. Most of the gentlemen were for pushing on to Scotland, but Charles refused firmly. He had no desire to return to that land of many humiliations, even if it were possible, and he doubted that he would be any safer there than in England now that he had lost a battle.

"Men who have deserted me when they were in good order," he said bitterly and rather unjustly, "would never stand to me when they have been beaten."

His own plan was for every member of the party to shift for himself and make for the Continent as best he could. They were too many, he argued, to escape suspicion and too few to make any sort of effective resistance. But he himself, they reminded him, was a marked figure.

"This made me take the resolution of putting myself into a disguise," he would say afterwards when telling the story of his adventures, "and endeavouring to get a-foot to London in a country fellow's habit with a pair of ordinary gray cloth breeches, a leathern doublet and a green jerkin, which I took in the house of Whiteladies. I also cut my hair very short and flung my clothes into a privy house, that nobody might see that anybody had been stripping themselves."

With a prudence which he saved for acute dangers, Charles would not trust the noblemen who clustered around him. He knew that many of them were indiscreet by nature and that any of them might soon be offered their own lives in exchange for his. There was only one of the lot, he thought, whose loyalty would be sure to stand such a test. Wilmot alone took with him the secret of his master's intentions when the entourage rode off to meet their fates. Most of them were caught before the week was out.

Nine

As guides for the first perilous miles of his journey, Charles had been recommended to the brothers Penderell, tall, lean, taciturn country fellows who had spent their lives in the neighbourhood of Whiteladies. There were five of them, and Charles liked their trustworthy looks. After his experiences with indiscreet cavaliers and suspicious Puritans, these silent, rather dull appearing yeomen were a welcome relief. Furthermore they were Catholics, and Charles was far from sharing the general English prejudice against them. The most dogged royalists were men of this faith, for they could hope for tolerance only from a King. And in the work to be done now, they were more experienced than any other sect in England, for they had been trained by a century of persecution to keep secrets. Every Catholic had learned to be unobtrusive himself and to conceal hunted men.

The priests who kept the old religion alive in England travelled the country in the strictest disguise, but such precautions could not always avert suspicion on the part of fanatics who were always smelling about for the Popishly inclined. His flock must always be ready to hide a priest and pass him on from one secure retreat to another. Catholic country houses were not complete in the seventeenth century unless equipped with " priests holes," ingeniously hidden cells between walls or behind fireplaces or in cellars or attics. Catholic farmers knew every unfrequented lane, every unguarded ferry, every hiding place for miles around.

Consequently Charles could not do better than look for help to the Catholics. If they could take as good care of him as they did of their spiritual advisers, he might yet escape his pursuers. The first thing to be done was to find a place of concealment for the next few hours, since he was much too wearied by a day's hard fighting and a night's hard riding to go far. Besides it would be safer to travel after dark. The Penderells thought Boscobel wood, which was nearby, offered safe cover, and there the King rested, most uncomfortably, for it rained hard. However, he was not unthankful, for the downpour, which was confined almost entirely to the woods, discouraged searchers who were beating the neighbourhood for stray fugitives.

After he had slept Charles made new plans. The only part of England with which he was at all familiar was the West, where he had commanded so ingloriously as Prince of Wales. Here too were most of his personal acquaintances in England. Once across the Severn his chances of escape would be better " as being a way I thought none would suspect my taking."

At nightfall he consulted with Richard Penderell, who agreed that the scheme had possibilities. The countryman knew a ferry which, he thought, could be used in safety. He admonished Charles not to speak to anyone they met lest his accent betray him for a gentleman, and they set off towards the river. They were passing a mill about midnight when they received a bad fright, the first of so many that the King was to become quite accustomed to them.

The miller was sitting at his door, his white clothes disclosing his presence, despite the darkness of the moonless night.

" Who goes there? " he called out as he heard the approaching footsteps.

" Neighbours going home," replied Penderell.

" If you be neighbours stand or I will knock you down," the miller ordered.

But Penderell was already fumbling at the gate leading into a lane, whereupon the miller yelled " Rogues! Rogues! " Several men whom Charles took to be soldiers ran out of the house.

" So we," his Majesty would explain with much relish after it was all over, " fell a-running, both of us, up the lane as long as we could run, it being very deep and very dirty."

At last they could go no further. The two men leaped the hedge and lay breathless on the other side listening for sounds of pursuit. They heard none, and after half an hour's rest continued on their way. Penderell later learned that the miller, too, had been hiding royalist fugitives and had only wanted to scare inquisitive Puritans from his door.

It was nearly light when Charles and his guide came to the village for which Penderell was making. He proposed to enlist the aid of one Woolfe, a local Catholic gentleman, and went ahead to see if the man would help a refugee. Woolfe, who alone of his household was awakened by Penderell's knock, said he would not risk his neck for anyone alive except the King. Penderell promptly told him the King was waiting outside, " at which I was not a little troubled, but then there was no remedy, the day just coming on, and I must either venture that or run some greater danger." His new host blasted his hopes of getting across the river at this point, explaining that the ferry was well guarded. There was nothing to do but turn back, but it was not safe to travel in daylight. All Woolfe's priests holes had recently been discovered, so he hid Charles and Penderell in the barn among the corn and hay where they slept until night.

When he started out again, Charles was stiff and sore. His feet were blistered by the unaccustomed roughness of his stockings and his ill-fitting shoes, but he limped on until they reached the mill where they had been so frightened the night before. Charles proposed swimming the mill stream and proceeding cautiously along the other side, but Penderell could not swim.

" So I told him that the river being but a little one, I would undertake to help him over."

Hand in hand they struggled through the water, and before daylight had reached the Penderell home. There Charles found another royalist refugee, Major Careless, who was horrified to see his sovereign dripping wet, covered with dirt and hardly able to stagger into the house. Careless suggested that the safest way of spending the day was in the branches of a tree, from which they themselves could see, yet where their enemies would hardly look for them. Charles thought it a sound scheme, but before putting it into execution sent one of the Penderells off to see what had become of Wilmot and what the chances were of getting to London. Then he and the Major, carrying some bread, cheese and beer, which had been Charles' only food since the battle except some cold meat at Woolfe's house, climbed up into a huge oak with comfortably spreading branches and dense foliage. Here Charles, quite worn out, fell sound asleep, his head on Careless' shoulder, his legs dangling and the Major's arms around him to keep him from falling. For hours he slept with scarcely a quiver, despite the awkwardness of his position, while his companion, awed by the magnitude of his burden, endured all the agonies of cramp with stoic pride. He endured, that is, until some soldiers appeared among the trees. Then, fearing a slip might betray them, he woke the King and together they watched Cromwell's men poking about among the trees and bushes.

The search was very close, for it had been cried throughout the land that the captor of Charles Stuart would receive a reward of one thousand pounds. The sum meant a comfortable independence for life to the lucky winner, and thousands of Englishmen were hunting eagerly for the " tall black man upwards of two yards high." Charles himself was not a little alarmed by the vastness of the temptation which had been placed in the way of his benefactors, and their fidelity drew from him an affectionate gratitude which he had been brought up to regard as unbecoming a Prince. His was a heart hard to touch with any emotion, but the Penderells managed to do it.

Night permitted the fugitives to descend from their bower. Penderell had meanwhile brought word that Wilmot was in a secure though temporary haven at the home of Colonel Whitgreaves, to which the King was advised to come for a conference. With Humphrey Penderell as his guide, he tramped the weary miles over the rough country roads, stumbling painfully in the darkness. Every step was agony, for his tender feet had been rubbed raw, were swollen and split and blistered. But he hobbled along with the help of a crooked thorn stick and cracked bitter jests which the stolid Penderell did not understand. When he finally reached Whitgreaves' house, his friends were shocked inexpressibly by his appearance. The King's Majesty was a scarecrow figure, pitiful in its attempt to greet them with a jaunty yet regal air. The clothes he wore had been shabby when he put them on, but now they were covered with dust, stained with wet and mire, torn by brambles. The dirt upon his face was streaked and plastered with sweat. His shoes had been slashed with a knife to ease his swollen feet and little rolls of paper protruded from between his toes where he had placed them to prevent galling.

But he was quite cheerful. He was growing accustomed to danger, and his easy nature readily accommodated itself to chuckling at the pass to which royalty had been brought in England. Once he had washed, donned a clean shirt belonging to Father Hudleston, a priest in the Whitgreave household, and eaten heartily, he accounted it so far a mercy that he was not among his spiritual advisers in Scotland.

Next day the fugitives moved on to the home of another trusted royalist, Colonel Lane, and here the next steps of the escape were arranged. The Colonel's sister, Jane, was going to visit a cousin who lived near Bristol, and she had a pass for herself and a serving man to travel freely to that town. Colonel Lane proposed that his Majesty personate the serving man. Once in Bristol, where he had friends, a passage to France might be secured. It was a fair plan and agreed upon at once.

Next morning Mistress Jane, a handsome, assured and most discreet young woman, set off for the West with Will Jackson riding humbly behind her. Through the woods that bordered the road, Lane, Wilmot and a few others pretended to be hawking, so that they might send back word of approaching danger. There was none except to Wilmot, and Charles was quite anxious for the safety of this friend whom he had arranged to meet in Bristol.

" I could never get my Lord Wilmot to put on any disguise, he saying that he should look frightfully in it," the King would remark appreciatively when telling the story.

He himself was not so vain of his personal appearance, and fitted with surprisingly little awkwardness into his rôle. On the very first day, his horse cast a shoe, and his Majesty became quite matey with the smith who replaced it. They discussed the news of the day, and the smith regretted " that he did not hear that that rogue Charles Stuart was taken."

" I told him that if that rogue were taken he deserved to be hanged more than all the rest for bringing in the Scots," said Charles, remembering his miseries. " Upon which he said that I spoke like an honest man and so we parted."

The pleasant autumn days passed slowly. Each one gave the travellers a little more confidence. Lady and servant, straining to appear as innocent as possible, were at last able to pass a detachment of the soldiers who infested the roads without flinching. But every day brought its embarrassments. The King did not make a good groom for the horses, although he improved greatly before the journey was over, and as he lodged of necessity with the inn servants wherever they stopped, he was always shy of giving himself away by accent or gesture. Maids who set the obliging young fellow to turn the roast for them were amazed at his fumbling manner. He only averted suspicion by explaining that his family was too poor to have roast meat often. And everywhere he went he saw copies of " A Proclamation for the Discovery and Apprehending of Charles Stuart and Other Traytors his Adherents and Abettors."

"Whereas," it read, "Charls Stuart, son of the late Tyrant, with divers of the English and Scottish Nation, have lately in a Trayterous and hostile manner with an Army invaded this Nation, which by the Blessing of God upon the Forces of this Commonwealth have been defeated, and many of the chief actors therein slain and taken prisoners; but the said Charls Stuart is escaped; For the speedy apprehending of such a Malicious and Dangerous Trayter to the Peace of this Commonwealth, the Parliament doth straightly Charge and Command all Officers, as well Civil as Military, and all other good people of this Nation, That they make diligent Search and Enquiry for the said Charls Stuart, and his Abettors and Adherents in this Invasion, and use their best Endeavors for the Discovery and Arresting the Bodies of them and every one of them; and being apprehended, to bring or cause to be brought forthwith and without delay in safe Custody before the Parliament or Counsel of State, to be proceeded with and ordered as Justice shall require; And if any person shall knowingly Conceal the said Charls Stuart, or any of his Abettors or Adherents, or shall not reveal the Places of their Abode or Being, if it be in their power so to do, the Parliament doth Declare, That they will hold them as partakers and Abettors of their Trayterous and Wicked Practices and Designs; And the Parliament doth further Publish and Declare, That whosoever shall apprehend the person of the said Charls Stuart, and shall bring or cause him to be brought to the Parliament or Counsel of State, shall have given and bestowed on him or them as a Reward for such Service, the sum of One thousand pounds; and all Officers, Civil and Military, are required to be aiding and assisting unto such person and persons therein. Given at Westminster this Tenth day of September, One thousand six hundred and fifty-one."

In spite of this proclamation the travellers reached Mistress Lane's destination, and new plans had to be devised. The dangers were obvious. In her cousin's home, the butler recognized the King at once, having been in service at court. He asked no more than to be allowed to kiss his Majesty's hand and keep his secret, but others might not be so loyal. The servants were at breakfast in the buttery one morning when a youth of the neighbourhood, just back from the wars, came in to tell them all about the battle of Worcester. He had been in Charles' regiment of guards and told tall tales of his own valour.

" I asked him," said Charles, " what kind of a man I was. To which he answered by describing exactly both my clothes and my horse; and then looking upon me, he told me that the King was at least three fingers taller than I. Upon which I made what haste I could out of the buttery for fear he should indeed know me, as being more afraid when I knew he was one of our own soldiers than when I took him for one of the enemy's."

Nothing in the way of a passage to the Continent was to be procured, and when Charles took his leave of Mistress Lane, adventures thickened around him. At Trent, where he was obliged to lie hidden nineteen days while his friends tried to secure a boat, " a rogue of a trooper come out of Cromwell's army " set the townsfolk to rejoicing and ringing the church bells, " telling the people he had killed me, and that that was my buff coat which he had then on." Charles was quite pleased when he learned the cause of the tumult and did not contradict the boaster.

When he was finally able to leave Trent and go to Burport, the inn where he had been told to meet Wilmot was full of soldiers and in his character of groom he had to blunder through a yard full of them.

" They were very angry with me for my rudeness," he remembered.

Then when a ship was found, the master paid and all in readiness for a quiet getaway in the morning, the captain's wife upset their calculations by locking her husband in his room and threatening to give the alarm unless the scheme were abandoned. Hurrying away from this place the fugitives were saved from being overtaken and examined as suspicious persons only because they missed the road and their pursuers went past them.

They rode on to Brighton before they dared try again for a boat. Here at last they were successful, and made a deal with Captain Tattersall, who was off on a coasting voyage. He was not averse to going out of his way sufficiently to cross the Channel and his price was not exorbitant considering the risk. As soon as he saw his passenger, however, he recognized him, for he had been on one of the fishing boats which Charles' fleet had captured and released three years before. He made no noise about it.

" I took no kind of notice of it presently to him," said Charles, " but thinking it convenient not to let him go home lest he should be asking advice of his wife or anybody else, we kept him with us in the inn and sat up all night drinking beer and taking tobacco with him."

The inn-keeper too was aware of his guest's identity, and sought him out alone to beg the privilege of kissing his hand, a favour which his Majesty graciously granted.

" God bless you wheresoever you go! " exclaimed the good man. " I do not doubt before I die but to be a lord and my wife a lady."

◆

" So I laughed, and went away into the next room."

The laugh covered some uneasiness but there was no need to worry. Of the dozens of men and women, mostly poor folk, who had been told or had guessed his identity, not one betrayed him by so much as a hint or a boastful word. He embarked quite safely on Tattersall's coaster and that same day his seven weeks of dangerous wanderings were over. The Captain had a most unusually speedy passage to Brest, and the wind served him so well that he was able to reach his own destination without anyone suspecting that he had been off his course.

Meanwhile his passenger was experiencing the last inconveniences of his defeat. The voyagers did not stop at Brest, but at Rouen, where they proposed to spend the night, " they made difficulty to receive us, taking us by our clothes to be some thieves or persons that had been doing some very ill thing, until Mr. Sandburne, a merchant, for whom I sent, came and answered for us."

Ten

PARIS forgot its own troubles in wonderment and royalists emerged from their despair in joy that the King of England was come among them again. Ever since the battle, the wildest rumours had been circulated. His family was alternately cheered by false news of his landing on the Continent and depressed by equally false announcements of his capture or death. Every member of the French court was eager to hear from his own lips the story of his adventures, and were genuinely amazed that he did it so well, with such gusto and wit.

In the pleasure of listening to his own voice and to the applause of his audiences, not to mention the delightful relief from the strain of masquerade, Charles found temporary consolation for being once more dependent upon charity. But so strong was the seven weeks' habit of carrying no money that when Cardinal de Retz offered him the loan of a substantial sum in gold for the journey from Rouen to Paris, the King declined it with thanks. It was the first — and the last — time he lost an opportunity of putting money in his purse.

The stories he told of his escape were almost as good as the real thing, to which they bore only a superficial resemblance. He could not expose his saviours to Cromwell's wrath, so he invented a wonderful tale of how he had made his way to London, living there in disguise and finally slipping away to the Continent. Every time he told it he added a few new details for purposes of verisimilitude. Some of them were contradictory, but no one seemed to notice, and every new version was circulated all over the world. The royal liar even had the audacity to relate a yarn of how, during his London visit, he had, despite his unusual height, disguised himself successfully as a gentlewoman. He told vague tales of where he had been in London, for it was a city of which he remembered almost nothing, but he was eloquent in praising the capital's coaches as the handsomest he had ever seen.

His audience was much impressed. Mlle. de Montpensier, who heard him with great attention, was moved to the point of once more considering Charles as a husband. His looks had improved; short hair became him, she thought. He was the hero of the hour. He could talk French quite eloquently and rattled on cheerfully about how miserable life had been in Scotland, a theme of which he never wearied. He horrified the French royal family with descriptions of life there, how little fun there was, how he had longed for a dance and the society of such charming women as those present now.

He remained, however, a lukewarm suitor, and Mademoiselle disapproved of the alacrity with which he was compensating himself for all the gayety he had missed. She was a serious young person and undertook to bring her cousin to a proper appreciation of his responsibilities. She told him severely that he ought not to be wasting his time in dancing, masques and light amusements. He should, she thought, be rsking his life to recover his rights. Charles, who had had quite enough lately of risking his life, was too courteous to make any reply. But her urgency confirmed him in his original view that she was a domineering, difficult, conceited and overly serious person. The matrimonial negotiations proceeded slowly despite Henrietta Maria's best efforts. They were brought to an abrupt end after many weeks of desultory conversations when La Grande Mademoiselle heard a rumour that she was going to marry the King of England for love. Such a base canard was not to be tolerated. The lady let it be known distinctly that she could never consider such a match.

Before she reached this decision her suitor had wearied of her country as much as of her. After his little moment of glory had passed, he found that he would receive in France only the casual courtesy merited by a man whose fortunes were irretrievably ruined. Their curiosity about his adventures satisfied, the French were careful to give him little encouragement. The old circle of English refugees, who might have furnished at least a semblance of royalty, had melted to a small group. Hundreds of cavaliers, convinced that the cause for which they had fought so long was now hopeless, hurried back to England to see what terms they could make with the Commonwealth for the recovery of their estates. Those who remained, whether from loyalty or because they had offended too deeply ever to receive a Parliamentary pardon, were a despondent crew, seeking to forget their disappointed ambitions in the relaxations of dissipation or diplomatic intrigue.

Charles moved among them with a regal air, concealing his sense of the irony of his appearance under an assumption that no worldly fate could impair the heavenly-bestowed gift of kingship. Greeted everywhere except in his own apartments with only a parody of the deference which he had been taught to regard as due his rank, he still kept, thanks to that same teaching, a faith that his circumstances were bound to improve. It was but human nature that men should desire to live under a monarchy; no other régime could satisfy true ambitions. His confidence, good nature, indolence and adaptability enabled him to present a placid demeanour to a scornful world. It also led him to plunge with ever fresh hope into the wildest plans that might be devised for restoring him to his throne by the exertions of others.

He was no longer the guileless young king who had in the rashness of his youth thought to out-manoeuvre the Scots at Breda. He was no longer so impetuous as to venture his ease, his safety, his life on a forlorn hope, as had the young commander who called on Leslie's troops for one last charge at Worcester. But he was ready to promise his support to anyone who would rise for him. He spent his inadequate income, the proceeds of foreign and English charity, in advancing impossible projects. He granted blank commissions by the dozen to disgruntled Englishmen who thought they could raise squadrons or regiments in his name. He read a mass of uninteresting correspondence directed to the one end of showing him the fundamental weakness of the English republicans and the unsuspected strength of English royalists. He spent dreary hours with Hyde and Nicholas and Ormonde, listening to their lectures on what his attitude should be towards foreign governments, towards English rebels who might repent, towards his father's old friends.

He saw the Englishmen in Paris drift gradually into opposing parties, bickering with a fierceness that might have led a stranger to suppose that they were disposing of empires instead of places in a kingdom which had no existence so long as Cromwell kept the regard of his Ironsides. As the exiles settled into the inevitable rut, they found themselves much more hostile to each other than if they had really had something to do.

Their eternal quarrelling reached a climax when Hyde's enemies solemnly impeached him for lese majesty. The criminal, his virtuous opponents declared with every affectation of horror, had been heard to say that their King was as much given to his pleasures as any other young man in his early twenties. The maligned monarch's first impulse was to dismiss the charge with merry laughter, for the words repeated to him were much milder than the honest Chancellor was accustomed to use in the royal presence. But even this ridiculous farce had to be played seriously to keep the peace, and Hyde was ceremoniously acquitted after a long, extremely dull hearing of the case before the full Privy Council.

Naturally the King who had to preside at such a trial developed an attitude of cynicism. Charles was a realist, where royalty was not concerned, and as such he saw human struggles in their most ridiculous light. Contempt quite easily followed the laughter, and as the years of helplessness passed, he protected his own sanity by maintaining that all human activity must be of this futile, childish sort where Hyde and Jermyn struggled against each other for a prize that would melt away in the hands of the winner. The King had sufficient strength of mind to insulate himself from the unimportant intrigues of his court as well as from the gibes of foreigners and rebels who looked upon him as a royal clown or a frivolous pretender. With a wholeheartedness which his preceptor, Hobbes, might well have envied, Charles devoted himself to such counter-revolutionary plots as could lead him to no sacrifice save money and to such pleasures as were available without much effort. He improved his French in love making and in even more idle forms of conversation. He hunted and swam and played billiards. He revived his chemical laboratory, but he gave up mathematics, and a few months after his return to Paris, Nicholas wrote joyfully:

" All honest men here who are lovers of monarchy are very glad that the K. hath at length banisht his court that father of atheists, Mr. Hobbes."

Instead of studying, his Majesty danced and sang and, so far as his means and credit allowed, played the young nobleman about town. He became a leading member of the gallant confederacy of " Bablonists," who were proud to have as their chief that redoubtable lover and warrior, the Prince of Condé. The band took its title from the *petit nom* of the Duchesse du Chatillon, the beauty of whom Condé was enamoured. They lightly regarded their honour as bound up with universal recognition of " Bablon's " right to be hailed as Queen of Hearts, and in a pleasantly dilettante manner they aped the age of chivalry.

Of a more passionate nature and only slightly less flaunted were the idle young King's other amours. Lucy Barlow saw him no more, for during his absence in Holland she had become too common property even for his taste, indifferent as he was to constancy in a mistress. But other ladies succeeded her in such rapid succession that within six months of his return to France, the young widow of Lord Byron was being described as " his Majesty's seventeenth mistress abroad," and Henrietta Maria called upon Hyde to have another young woman ejected from Charles' apartments at the Louvre on the grounds that she was of too low a rank to occupy such an exalted position.

The whole English royal family was miserably poor after Charles got through squandering the contributions of his friends upon the abortive plots. Creditors swarmed about the court, and not even the memory of Henry the Great could keep them from clamouring for their money. When the Queen took the air her eldest son rode close beside her to beat them off. At last they refused further supplies unless paid cash, and one bitter winter morning Cardinal de Retz was horrified to find the little Princess Henriette unable to leave her bed because she had no warm clothes and her mother's apartments were unheated. Wood dealers insisted on being paid before they would send up any more fuel. The prelate's own purse solved the difficulty that day, but the relief was only temporary, and Charles' suite suffered even more than his mother's. Hyde was so shabby he was ashamed to be seen on the streets and he ate inadequately with others of the court at one of the cheapest tables in Paris. The postage for the innumerable letters the exiles exchanged in the hope of hearing something encouraging was a heavy burden upon what passed for the royal exchequer. It became so serious that Hyde and Nicholas complained to each other of the unnecessary weight of despatches, some of which required fees of £5.

The French court was not much help, for the pension it had promised was seldom paid. France was having her own troubles in the shape of the civil wars of the Fronde, fought on the most trivial pretexts but bloody and expensive enough to keep statesmen anxious and the Treasury empty. The martial spirit engendered by these wars was so infectious that within a year of Worcester, Charles was regretting that his pretensions as a sovereign ruler prevented him from enlisting as an adventurer in his cousin's army. There was no such scruple to keep James from marching off to war, and the young Duke of York was delighted to exchange the dull poverty of his brother's court for the luxurious glory of Marshal Turenne's camp. French noblemen went out to fight amid more than the comforts of home, living in silken tents, served by a large train of domestics, attended by much of the fashionable world, entertaining splendidly and fighting just enough to keep up the excitement. James fitted easily into this career. He attracted British volunteers to his standard in such numbers that he was at once given a general's pay, allowances and rank, and under Turenne's tutelage was soon performing the duties too. His fame as a promising young soldier made the indolent, purposeless, useless existence of Charles appear even more contemptible in French eyes. Besides, the King's boon companions were such turbulent spirits that Mary of Orange, although no lover of a quiet life, told Nicholas that if her brother " do not make good choice of orderly and quiet persons to be about him, it will make all places unwilling to give him entertainment."

No one would take him seriously. They jeered at him for seeking nothing but amusement, and they laughed when he turned his attention to the vain hope of recovering his lost realms. In the royalist councils — " fuller of factions than men," a Puritan commented — it was impossible to keep any secret, and every plot was promptly betrayed to Cromwell. While that strong man was binding England firmly into a Protectorate under his own guidance, Charles was projecting futile invasions. The Dutch had attempted a naval war with the Commonwealth, and when they were defeated, the young King wrote that if they would furnish him with a fleet, he would conquer the usurper or die in the attempt. A similar letter went to Denmark. Both epistles were ignored.

There was even some talk of going back to Scotland, admittedly a counsel of despair, but Middleton still held out in the Highlands, and the King's convenient memory recalled Montrose's exploits more clearly than Montrose's end. But all the plans, entered into with high hopes and higher language, fizzled out in impotent discussion that was almost public and extremely bitter.

"The best sport in the world to hear them being so earnest for the matter of nothing," one of the Cromwellian spies wrote his masters.

Charles himself more nearly understood the realities of his position than did his advisers. As evidence that even his insensitive nature was not altogether without resentment at the injustice of the world's opinion and that he knew better than most men how little his struggles could avail him is the following letter he wrote at this time:

"They who will not beleeve any thinge to be reasonably designed except it be succesfully exequted, had neede of a lesse difficulte game to play then myne is; and I hope my frends will thinke that I am now to olde (he was twenty-three) and have to much experience of things and of persons to be grosly imposed upon."

Considering the difficulty of his game, the masters of England were not so contemptuous of his weakness as they were of his morals. They kept a sharp eye on royalist plotters, and in the spring of 1653 the Commonwealth gave them one less figure to rally around at home by sending young Harry, the thirteen-year-old Duke of Gloucester, to join his brothers in exile. There was some talk of apprenticing him to a trade so that at least one Stuart would be able to earn his living honestly, but less democratic counsels prevailed, and Charles welcomed his little brother with joy.

The family group was also increased by the return of

Rupert from what English merchants cholerically referred to as a piratical cruise. The perfect cavalier had accomplished miracles of privateering with a few leaky old ships, but he had lost most of his treasure in wrecks, and the cousins soon quarrelled over the disposition of the rest. Rupert wanted to pay the debts he had contracted in provisioning the fleet. Charles, who had long since grown to regard debt as the natural state of man, did not see why he should be bound by promises to these paltry tradesmen. What commoner's rights, he demanded with sincere confidence that the argument was unanswerable, could stand in the way of royal necessities? Rupert was forced to yield, but his loyalty conquered his resentment, and soon he was joining Charles in a swim, a game of billiards or a hunt. A little later he set out cheerfully for Vienna to raise money for the old cause.

More than usually Charles needed money, for he was desperately anxious to get out of France, and the French were more than eager to see him go. Mazarin was negotiating a treaty with Cromwell, and the Lord Protector insisted that no friend of his could harbour the traitor, Charles Stuart. Yet the King of France could not with honour ask his own cousin, fleeing to his arms for refuge, to quit the country. He could only make it so unpleasant that the exile would leave of his own free will. For months Charles tried every scheme that the ingenuity of a hardened borrower could suggest to fit himself and his dependents for a journey. Mazarin in his thrift hoped to get the visitor off without paying for it. He was spending large sums to prepare for Louis's formal coronation ceremonies, and he did not see why he should waste money to speed a guest who wanted to depart anyway. At last, however, it was obvious the unwelcome King could not go without assistance. Charles raised some money by the sale of the guns from Rupert's ship; Mazarin reluctantly yielded an advance on the pension that had long been promised, and on a hot July day the King of England rode out of Paris on horseback — he could not afford a coach — to resume his wanderings in other lands, while Hyde mourned that his master " is as low now as to human understanding he can be."

Eleven

THE period that Hyde regarded as unbelievably sordid for a King was to Charles the happiest of his exile. He rode from the unfriendly, critical atmosphere of Mazarin's France to the genial, easy-going towns of Germany where the people had no chivalric notions that a landless monarch ought to battle for his rights. They neither exalted him uncomfortably nor mocked him for having been brought so near their own estate. They even tolerated more generously the touchy, noisy swaggerers of the court. Some eighty gentlemen had followed their King to join forces with Mary of Orange in Germany. Until fall, brother and sister wandered where they could find the most amusement. They enjoyed themselves hugely, mostly at her expense.

" We pass our time as well as People can do that have no more Money," Charles wrote a friend in Paris, " for we Dance and Play as if we had taken the Plate-fleet."

At Spa, Aix, Cologne and many a town between, the King of England became a familiar figure, and a popular one. He made friends easily, and the eccentric Queen Christina of Sweden, who had abdicated her throne for the pleasures of irresponsibility, was so charmed with him that she exclaimed:

◆

" If I had another crown to dispose of, I would bestow it on the good poor King of England."

While he lived thus happily, his envoys, or state beggars, plied their trade on his behalf in all the courts of the Empire and beyond. From Scandinavia to Rome, from Flanders to Russia, the " borrowers " went in quest of aid for royalty in distress. Although they seldom realized their expectations, they were hardly ever turned away quite penniless. But most of the receipts left over after the expenses of the embassies were met, as well as thousands of pounds contributed by English royalists, were still wasted by the incorrigible plotters.

These hopeful men were always willing to risk their lives, even though they would not go so far as to exercise discretion in Charles' service. In all his adversities he had remained courteous, affable, approachable and more generous than his immediate followers considered appropriate to his means. Hundreds of gentlemen were so fascinated by his charm of manner that their loyalty to the Stuarts grew passionately fanatical. Their devotion was his greatest asset, and he took immense pains to keep it.

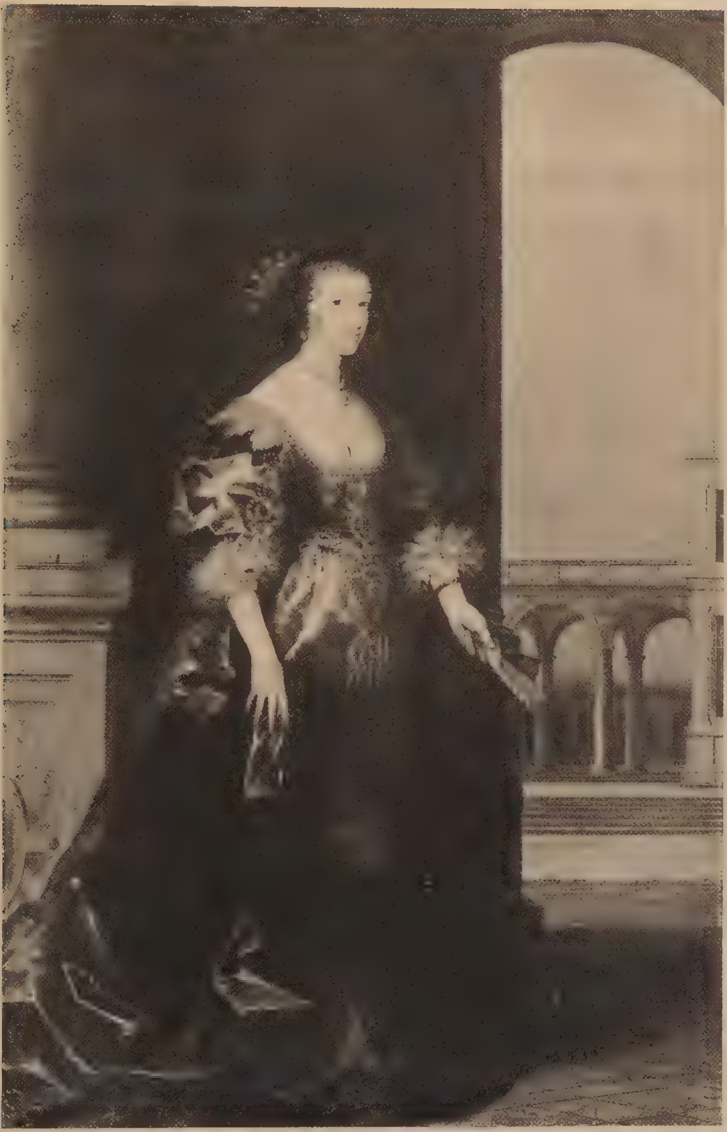
He was sure they could only be alienated from him on religious grounds, and in order to prevent suspicions of his own constancy to the Faith for which his father had died a martyr, he became involved in the most bitter family quarrel of his exile. He had left the Duke of Gloucester in his mother's care, and one day learned that she was endeavouring, despite her promises, to convert the boy to Catholicism. Harry was staunch in his own belief, but Henrietta Maria had deprived him of all Protestant attendants. Charles wrote to her indignantly and much more firmly than was his custom, for he was beginning to agree with one who had said of his parents, " I do not wonder that he who gave himself to be governed by such a woman hath lost three crowns." His followers observed with surprise that he was genuinely worried about his brother. He knew Englishmen would believe that he himself was weakening if Harry were permitted to apostasize. It was bad enough that the baby of the family, the Princess "Minette," was being raised a Catholic, a procedure against which Charles had protested on political grounds but in vain. He could not take so young a girl from her mother, but Harry was a different matter. Charles was sufficiently alarmed to handle all the correspondence himself.

"If you hearken to her or any body els in that matter," he wrote the young Duke, "you must never thinke to see England or me againe and whatever mischeife shall fall on me or my affairs from this time, I must lay all upon you, as being the only cause of it. Therefore consider well what it is not only to be the cause of ruineing a brother that loves you soe well, but alsoe of your King and country. Doe not let them perswade you, either by force or faire promises; for the first they neither dare nor will use; and for the second as soon as they have perverted you they will have their end, and will care no more for you."

From his own store of experience in theological controversy he added this bit of advice:

"And whensoever any body shall goe to dispute with you in religion, doe not answer them at all."

He did not leave the boy to fight the battle alone. France was closed to him, but he ordered Ormonde to take Harry away from his mother and bring him to Germany. Ormonde performed the unpleasant, difficult task successfully, and Harry joined the court, still a good Protestant. It was an incident to which Charles could point when his



Henrietta Maria

"Her temperament inclined her to gaiety."

attendance at Catholic churches to hear the music or see the relics gave rise to scandal about his possible conversion. It may have been in his mind a few years later when he wrote:

“ We valew Our selfe soe much upon that parte of Our title of being Defendor of the Faith that noe worldly temptations can ever prevayle with Us to swarve from it and the Protestant Religion in which We have been bredd.”

But life was by no means all family quarrels and light amusements. Hyde’s beloved “ business ” claimed much of his time. Charles heard so constantly of circumstances unfavourable to the great enemy, Cromwell, that he wrote:

“ I cannot hinder my selfe from building castles in the air.”

Now it was England’s war with Spain, for no cavalier thought the Protector could prevail against that nation whose power was a legend that died hard. Then the English people would surely rise in rebellion against the crushing taxes which the usurper was levying with no more show of authority than Charles the First had used. Again there was the hope of murdering Cromwell, which was sometimes alternated with a scheme for marrying Charles to Cromwell’s daughter and making the father-in-law Lord Lieutenant of Ireland as a reward for restoring the rightful monarch. Still other optimistic souls thought it would be easy to win George Monk to the royal cause. He had been sent by Cromwell to rule Scotland, and was slowly ending Middleton’s long-drawn-out struggle to keep a royal army in the Highlands. Monk had adopted an intelligent policy of conciliating the Scots, which seemed to ardent cavaliers to indicate a leaning towards their cause. They represented this so strongly to their King that one day Monk's vigilant soldiers intercepted among other royalist correspondence this letter:

"One who beleeves he knows your nature and inclinations very well assures me that notwithstanding all ill accidents and misfortunes you retaine still your old affection to me and resolve to express it uppon the seasonable opportunity, which is as much as I look for from you. Wee must all waite patiently for that opportunity, which may bee offered sooner than you expect. When it is, lett it finde you ready and in the meane time have a care to keep your selfe out of their hands who know the hurt you can doe them in a good conjuncture, and can never but suspect your affection to bee as I am confident it is towards

Your very affect. frend,
Charles R."

The letter bore no address, and the messenger could not tell for whom it was ultimately intended. Monk wrote to Cromwell, however, that he hoped soon to discover the identity of the villain. The Protector had already learned it, and having entire trust in his lieutenant, besides enjoying a certain grim humour at times, informed the diligent administrator of his find in these words:

"There be some that tell me that there is a certain cunning fellow in Scotland called George Monk who is said to lie in wait there to introduce Charles Stuart; I pray you use your diligence to apprehend him and send him up to me."

The other hopes proved no better founded than those which centred around Monk. As between Cromwell's taxes and Cromwell's Ironsides, the people decided to endure the taxes, which were after all not so devastating as Charles was led to believe. There had never been any possibility of a marriage with Cromwell's daughter. Even if Charles could have brought himself to it, the Protector was not the man to sell his country or his child to such a debauchee as he heard Charles Stuart was.

Assassination was planned more than once on both sides. One day James wrote that he had heard of four Catholics who were sworn to murder the usurper. The Duke passed on the information to his brother because "the desine seems to me to be better layd and resolved on then any I have knowen of that kind." Several times the murder of Charles was spoken of among Puritans, but the better Commonwealth men had scruples which did not touch royalists. The exiles regarded Cromwell as outside the pale of all laws, human or divine. Their attitude was contained in kindly old Secretary Nicholas' remark that he was "confident that as any man that will undertake such a charitable business will do it principally out of conscience and honour for the goodness of the deed, so I am assured no man that shall effect so glorious a work can possibly fail of an ample and very honourable reward for it on earth as in heaven." These sayings and such things as a little pamphlet entitled "Killing No Murder" caused the Lord Protector to go in fear of his life. In a widely circulated broadside, he read:

"To your Highness justly belongs the honour of dying for your people and it cannot but be an unspeakable consolation to you in the last moments of your life to consider with how much benefit to the world you are likely to leave it. It is then only, my lord, the titles you now usurp will be truly yours; you will then be indeed the deliverer of your country, and free it from a bondage little inferior to that from which Moses delivered his. You will then be that true reformer which you would now be thought;

religion shall then be restored, liberty asserted and Parliaments have those privileges which they have sought for. All this we hope from your Highness's happy expiration. To hasten this great good is the chief end of my writing this paper; and if it have the effects I hope it will, your Highness will quickly be out of the reach of men's malice, and your enemies will only be able to wound you in your memory, which strokes you will not feel."

The illusion of Spanish victory over the English usurper was the one which Charles relinquished much the most reluctantly. Despite repeated demonstrations, few men realized how rapidly and completely the power of Spain was decaying. When war was actually declared, Charles hurried from his happy retreat in Germany to the Spanish possessions in Flanders. There he received lavish promises, much ceremonious but frigid courtesy, very poor lodgings and almost no money. But with his own optimism to lend an illusory strength to the promises and the courtesy, the exile flung himself into the Spanish cause. He ordered James to leave the French service and accept a commission from Spain. He urged his loyal subjects to enlist under his brother's standard. He wrote hopeful letters to England that with the help of a Spanish army, the Stuart star would soon be rising. He was obliged to be quite peremptory with James. That young man was extremely well satisfied where he was. But direct orders brought him to Flanders and placed him at the head of several thousand British troops, mostly Irish, whom the young general despised for their ignorance of soldierly life and for the poverty of their equipment.

Of course nothing came of it. The Spaniards talked grandiloquently, but they confined their actions to providing victories for their French and English enemies. The

Flemings over whom they ruled were quite friendly and Charles thought them the kindliest people he had met, but they could do little for him. The Dutch, in fear of Cromwell, refused to permit the exile to set foot on their soil, and were constantly warning the Princess of Orange that she must not receive visits from her brothers. The size of his court had dwindled by desertions, the elimination of a few traitors and the fact that most of the " family " had been left in pawn at Cologne under orders to remain until Charles could pay their debts, orders which kept some of them in Germany for a couple of years. Those who remained with the King spent their time in hunting and what one of the English spies called " obscure amusements."

" I think I may truly say," said he, " that greater abominations were never practised among people than at this day at Charles Stuart's court. Fornication, drunkenness and adultery are esteemed no sins amongst them, so that I persuade myself God will never prosper any of their attempts."

The good Puritans were still unaccustomed to the casual manner of the royal amours. They were scandalized by the King's discarded mistresses even more than by those he kept. Lucy Barlow especially was a source of much trouble. Although he had refused to see her because her promiscuity offended even his tolerance, he could not be indifferent to her fate as the mother of his son. He sent her money and she was saved by his influence from being hounded out of The Hague as " an infamous person." At last Hyde and Ormonde hit upon a scheme which they thought would relieve their master of a burden which troubled their sense of propriety much more than it worried him. They scraped together enough money to get her an annuity of £400 and shipped her to England. The strategy was bad. Three weeks later Cromwell with his own hand wrote out an order to send "Charles Stuart's lady of pleasure and the young heir" into Flanders. "Which," added the Protector, "is no ordinary courtesie."

The adventure had not improved Lucy's temper or habits, and Charles became alarmed for the welfare of his son. He endeavoured to have the boy taken away from her, and there was a most unedifying scene in the streets of Brussels when the enraged mother pursued her former lover's emissary through the streets shrieking curses and threats. The townsfolk had to interfere. This aroused Charles to action. He declared he would disown both mother and child unless little James were given into such hands as he should select. Lucy consented, and the boy was sent to Paris where Henrietta Maria looked after him for a time, and finally turned him over to Lord Crofts, whose name he took. Lucy died soon thereafter, quite unmourned. She had reared her son so badly that at nine years old he could not yet read nor count as much as twenty.

James was not the only child for whom Charles had to provide. Betty Killigrew had a daughter named Charlotte Jemima Henrietta Maria Fitzroy, and during the King's stay in Flanders the lovely Catherine Pegge bore him another son, Charles Fitzcharles. He welcomed these children as dependents who were not nearly so quarrelsome, expensive and demanding as most of those for whose necessities he was responsible.

He was obliged to spend much more time negotiating with Spain for money than in elaborating procedure against the common enemy. The Spaniards were quite generous towards James, who had made his troops an important part of the Spanish army and whose military talents were appraised even more highly than they deserved in contrast with the incompetent dishonesty of most Spanish generals. But they were so niggardly with the elder brother that by March, 1657, Nicholas was writing:

"I have not known the K. in greater want then he is, not having had wherewith to pay his domestic servants these 18 months."

This worried Charles much less than the realization that the Spanish alliance was going to do him no good, and he returned to his pleasures with so much gusto that young King Louis of France loftily remarked from the security of his throne and the wisdom of his twenty years that if he were in his English cousin's place, he would not pursue amusement so assiduously but would "rather seek with tears to appease the wrath of God." That was not Charles' way, and he continued to follow his own light inclinations while waiting for something to turn up, regardless of the many who tried to tell him how an exiled monarch should behave. However, he showed he did not mind such advice, for the man who gave it most was Hyde, and Charles now conferred upon him an empty but honourable promotion to the Lord Chancellorship. Hyde's duties remained unchanged. He continued to disapprove, and his sovereign continued to seek pleasure where he could find it.

Then once again the croakings and the pleasures were forgotten in the eager anticipations which followed the news of Cromwell's death. Surely this was a sign! Royalist correspondence took a lively spurt. Letters in cipher, the code of which was as well known to enemies as friends, letters not quite concealing their meaning in ambiguous phrases about mercantile or banking or matrimonial transactions, letters without any effort at secrecy passed to and fro across the Channel. Number 10 would soon be able to return to 165. Mr. Jackson would find his bankers accommodating or the young lady's parents inclining to his suit. In such language the cavaliers expressed the blooming of hope. Charles held himself in readiness to rush to England at a moment's notice. For years royalists had maintained that only Cromwell's satanic influence kept a loyal people from returning to their allegiance. The hated Oliver had seemed to contain within himself all the Puritan, republican strength of England. For a few glorious weeks, the exiles hoped that both Puritanism and republicanism had died with him.

The days of waiting trailed off miserably into weeks of despair. So far as these observers in Flanders could see, Cromwell's son, Richard, had succeeded to his father's title and power without even a show of resistance. Charles resumed, with an ease which successive disappointments had taught him, the old dissolute life and the reckless plotting. The Low Countries no longer pleased him, but as often as he tried to escape them for the congenial society of his sister in Holland, the vigilant George Downing, English Ambassador at The Hague, heard about it and had him warned off. No matter how secretly he might contrive his visit, this diplomat knew of it and was so bold as to complain that the Dutch would not capture him for surrender to English justice.

But Downing's masters had too much to worry about at home to waste time vainly pursuing a man whom they despised as a libertine lost to grace in the eyes of God. Richard's Protectorate lacked the autocratic spirit which had kept his father in power. Only Oliver had been able to curb the fanaticism and suspicion of the army he had moulded. The stern soldiers of the Lord would trust no one, and blamed anyone else for the troubles they themselves had brought upon the land. Oliver had left behind him enormous debts, for his glorious wars had been expensive and gained nothing but glory. The best producers of the country were in his army; the best sailors in his navy. The result was scarcity of production at home and a steady falling off of trade abroad. Though Oliver could beat the Dutch in battle, he could not take their commerce from them. His son succeeded to the task of dealing with problems growing daily more acute than those Oliver had met, and he was not the man for it. As discontent rose around him, he pursued his kindly pacific way. He had no thirst for power; his ambitions were all peaceful, and when some of his father's friends advised him to deal with the discontented in Oliver's stern manner, he replied:

" Talk no more of it. I am thankful for your friendship, but violent counsels suit not with me."

So Richard Cromwell calmly, unresisting and almost gladly stepped out of the political arena. He left disorder heading rapidly for anarchy, and once again the royalists thought they saw their chance. Their affairs had been in the hands of a secret society known as the " Sealed Knot " and under the control of this romantic organization a formidable rising was planned. It was the most ambitious project of its kind that had yet been attempted in the name of the Stuarts. It had its ramifications in every county. Hundreds of country mansions became arsenals, and added an astonishing number of horses to their stables. Men were drilled, commissions granted and the great day set — August first, 1659. At the very moment the Sealed Knot went into action, King Charles would land at one point on the coast and the Duke of York at another.

Nothing was neglected save secrecy. Oliver had left his successors an excellent spy system and intelligence of the conspiracy was not long in reaching London. Sir Richard Willis, an influential member both of the Sealed Knot and the exiled court, furnished the best information. But he was not a thorough traitor, and never betrayed individuals. He persuaded the leaders of the movement in England to delay their rising for ten days. He also warned Charles and James of the postponement as they were about to leave for England and almost certain capture. But his double treachery failed at one point. He had known nothing of the arrangements for Cheshire, and on the appointed day Sir George Booth raised the royal standard there. News of his little army's bravery brought Charles hurrying to Calais, but by the time he reached this point on his journey to England, he was met by word that Booth had been quickly crushed, and other conspirators intimidated. The almost anarchical Commonwealth had not had time to become alarmed about this most pretentious of all royalist plots.

The man who had hoped the most from it was thrown back again to his old life. In the search for foreign help he was again considering matrimony, but he was as unsuccessful in his negotiations for a wife as in all his other projects. He first considered a Protestant alliance, and wrote to the Dowager Princess of Orange, his sister's mother-in-law:

" I beseech you to let me know whether your daughter, the Princess Harriette be so far engaged that you cannot receive a proposition from me concerning her."

The answer was unfavourable, and Charles then turned his attention once more to France. Mazarin was still the man to conciliate, and he had several beautiful nieces known in Paris as " les Mazarinettes." Charles proposed to raise the Cardinal's favourite, Hortense Mancini, to royal rank, uniting his title to her inheritance of an enormous fortune and her uncle's influence. But Mazarin had lived too close to royalty to be dazzled by the offer. He replied with a becoming assumption of modesty that he could not think of marrying his own nieces as long as King Louis' maiden cousins remained single. La Grande Mademoiselle, at whom this was directed, thanked his Eminence without enthusiasm.

This conversation was part of a more complicated negotiation. At the time Charles was riding to Calais, France and Spain were making a peace at Fontarabia in the Pyrenees. As soon as Charles learned the end of Booth's rising, he hurried south to see what comfort he could pick up from the peace makers. The success which attended his proposal for the hand of Hortense Mancini was typical of his luck in other matters. Neither France nor Spain was prepared to give him any help. They regarded the English Commonwealth as so firmly settled, the Stuarts so definitely exiled, that Mazarin refused Charles permission to visit his mother in Paris lest London be offended by even this much encouragement of a pretender.

Twelve

A FEW months later all was changed. The courts of Spain and France became embarrassingly cordial. The Dutch withdrew all objections to visits. The most unlikely people hastened to profess their life-long loyalty to the Stuarts. Offers of money — and the cash too — poured in. Even the Puritan envoy, Downing, came into the royal presence, disguised in false whiskers, to promise on his knees before the man he had so often hounded out of Holland any services that might be required of him.

For George Monk was marching down from Scotland to resolve the anarchy into which English administration had drifted, and the world suspected, though it did not know, that Cromwell's old lieutenant had become a royalist. It was apparent that the people were ready for monarchy, and a perception of this altered state of affairs gave to Charles an importance which could hardly be exaggerated. Yet the exiled court had never been less active in politics. The change in England, so long struggled for, was taking place with almost no reference to the refugees. They could only watch and hope that Monk would be true to them, for he did not declare himself openly.

The vestiges of the Long Parliament, the "Rump" which had survived successive purgings, had been no substitute for the Protectorate. It had devoted itself too long to polemics to be capable of government. Nor was the army any more satisfactory. No officer in it was strong enough to set up a military dictatorship, although several were willing to try. But while civil and military factions had been forming, quarrelling and splitting up in England, Monk had been quietly consolidating his position in Scotland. He did it so well that when the Rump in its jealous weakness attempted to interfere with him, he was strong enough to place their officers under arrest and march his devoted troops across the border, proclaiming his intention of summoning a new, freely elected Parliament. He announced modestly that he would place his sword at the disposal of a responsible government. But as he advanced southwards at the head of the only force in England capable of making its will felt, the conviction deepened that he was friendly to a restoration of monarchy in his heart. It was the wise thing to be. Englishmen were weary of the Puritanism, heavy taxes, domineering soldiery and civil war which they associated with a republic. No close observer of public opinion could doubt that a free Parliament would be a royalist Parliament.

Consequently the exile in Flanders was the object of flattering attention even from those who did not know that the General had for some time been secretly committed to him. This time there was no foolishness of letters that could be intercepted. It had all been arranged with genuine discretion and by word of mouth through Sir John Grenville, a royalist who could keep a secret. Sir John had established his connection with the Monk family by giving the General's brother, Nicholas, who had gone into the Church, a living worth £300 a year. At the time of Booth's rising, the Churchman, by arrangement between Grenville and Hyde, had gone north to interest the General in royalism. Monk had made his first entrance into the civil wars on the side of the King. He had been captured and though released to fight for the Commonwealth his republicanism had never been extreme. Only his habit of caution, a habit which had been of more use to his career than military skill, led him at this time to delay his declarations until he saw what happened to Booth. When he had seen, he grew even more cautious and said they would have to wait.

He was not allowed to wait in peace. Nan Clarges had been his laundress, then his mistress and now as his wife she ruled the household more sternly than her husband ever ruled his troops. She had all the fierce monarchical sentiments of an ambitious plebeian. She was dazzled by the prospect of displaying herself in great, unwonted splendour at court. Every night she read him what he mournfully called " curtain lectures of damnation " and he was much too afraid of her tongue to reply to these tirades. He worried and lost sleep because she took to waking him up to tell him of her dreams, all of which pointed to a Stuart restoration. Monk was superstitious and she knew it. However, he gave her little satisfaction, sent the servants out of the room when she began to speak at table and replied to his chaplain's observation that her remarks were always the truth:

"True, Mr. Price, but I have learned a proverb, that he who follows Truth too close upon the heels will one time or other have his brains kicked out."

General Monk did not move quickly enough to endanger his brains. Although he came into England as its master, no word escaped his lips that could give encouragement to anyone. He listened to all, his broad face expressionless above his bulky, unmoving body while his jaws moved steadily upon a mouthful of tobacco. He entered London, still chewing, still declaring his only purpose was to subordinate military to civil power and make the civil power free. Even Charles in Brussels was not sure of the man's mind until Grenville came over with a verbal message which he had memorized because Monk did not choose to commit anything to paper.

" My heart," the General told Sir John, " was ever faithful to him, but I was never in a condition to do him service till this present, and you shall assure his Majesty that I am now not only ready to obey his commands but to sacrifice my life and fortune in his service."

When Grenville reached Brussels he found Charles inspecting with amusement letters from members of the Rump who bragged that they could bring Monk to terms in the King's interest if these terms sufficiently limited the power of the restored monarch.

" Little do they in England think that General Monk and I are upon so good terms, for I myself could hardly have believed it till your arrival," Charles said to Sir John.

Monk had sent a warning as well as assurances. He did not trust the Spaniards, and urged Charles to put himself where they could not get at him to extort a treaty as the price of his release. The King took the hint and moved to Breda. It was the place where he had negotiated with the Scots ten years before, but he was not superstitious and did not believe bad luck still clung to the place. He went there cheerfully, first sending Grenville home with a warrant for £3,000 a year and an Earldom in his pocket. He also sent a royal commission for Monk, but the General prudently kept it secret. He refused as yet to accept any reward or promises of reward, although Charles had written to William Morrice, Monk's kinsman and trusted man of business, a plain hint that the General could have anything he wanted in the way of rank, fortune and power.

The King was displaying a discretion learned at the cost of many betrayed secrets in the last ten years. Only Hyde, Nicholas and Ormonde were trusted with full knowledge of the negotiations. Hyde especially was invaluable in answering the enormous mass of correspondence without offending even the most bigoted Presbyterian. The fat statesman was in his element. He handled with dignity and tact the anxious bargainers from all the English factions. He also dashed off innumerable memoranda in an almost illegible hand concerning every possible contingency. He did not doubt, nor did his master, that the Parliament which Monk was summoning would demand some conditions before it would consent to receive its rightful King. There were long discussions and exchanges of notes in which Hyde outlined just how far his Majesty might yield in any given direction, but Downing, now making himself useful to the coming powers, wrote to John Thurloe, who had been Cromwell's Secretary of State:

" I am well informed that he is resolved in case any conditions be offered him to accept of them."

In England the nature of these conditions was being debated everywhere. The strict Presbyterians proposed to make them so harsh that Charles would have had to leave all his friends behind him in exile, relinquish his position as head of the Church of England and expose himself to the humiliations he had undergone in Scotland. Less recalcitrant Puritans wanted him bound only to the conditions which his father had at the last been willing to grant. But good cavaliers cried that surely England had had enough bitter experience of trying to dictate to a King. They argued hotly that only evil could follow such a rebellious doctrine, that his Majesty should return to his rightful place with no ties at all to bind him except such as he was graciously pleased to put upon himself. As Thurloe watched English sentiment becoming more enthusiastically and illogically royalist, he remarked that the cavaliers could no doubt have their way in the matter "if they will push for it."

While they were pushing, Charles at Breda was drawing up a declaration to his loving subjects which would explain to them his ideas of royalty, outline his policy and give them assurances that would quiet the fears of those who thought a change of government must be attended by proscriptions.

First of all Charles promised full and complete pardon to everyone save those that Parliament should except. He did not even exclude his father's murderers, although he explained that he relied on Parliament to deal with them. He expressed the intention of restoring the Church of England, but he won the Presbyterians by promising "liberty to tender consciences." The tangled problem of property confiscated and sold by the Commonwealth was to be left to Parliament, and Monk's army was to be paid and considered the royal force. The Declaration thus appeared to yield all things to the decision of the people, but it was not quite so liberal. Charles was really giving Parliament permission to clean up its own mess; for the future he gave up nothing of the power which his father had claimed and which the Tudors had wielded.

The cautious phrasing of this declaration and the patience with which the King refrained from committing himself to any party or conditions he owed to Hyde. The Chancellor held him firm against making promises which he did not intend to keep. He handled, too, the serious negotiations with men of weight, and Charles relied upon him without reserve. Every time some specific restriction upon the royal authority was proposed, Hyde gave the same answer.

" No man," he would say, " is so tender of the nation as the King is, and will do all he can to preserve it, except it be to offer violence to his conscience or honour; and they who believe he will buy the Crown upon such conditions as would make him ashamed to wear it will be deceived."

If this firmness was the Chancellor's, the method by which Presbyterian suspicions were allayed was all the King's own. One day a deputation of London ministers of that sect came to see him, with a view to combining a plea for favour with an analysis of the new ruler's religious character. Charles had them shown into the room next to his. They were told that his Majesty was at his devotions and at such times could never be disturbed. A moment later they heard just the sort of groaning to which all good Puritans gave vent when assuring the Lord they realized their own miserable condition. Charles had not forgotten his Scottish training, so when one of the ministers applied an ear to the key-hole, he heard a deep young voice crying in almost painful humility:

" Lord, since thou art pleased to restore me to the throne of my ancestors, grant me a heart constant in the exercise and protection of the Protestant religion."

The ministers were greatly edified, and went away eloquent witnesses against the rumour that Charles was inclined to Popery.

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In England the last flicker of Parliamentary opposition was being focussed on a proposal to crown Monk, for whom descent was claimed from the Plantaganets. Charles had suffered too many disappointments not to be suspicious of an old enemy bearing the gift of a crown, but the hope which had never failed him, even in the most unlikely projects, did not desert him now. He went from Breda to The Hague to be nearer England when the call should come.

As the day drew near for Parliament to meet, there could be no doubt of the decision to return to the old monarchy. Every man who felt he could possibly have a claim to mercy or gratitude wrote or travelled to Holland to advance his fortune under the guise of offering aid to a man who no longer needed it. The mail bags were choked with letters of submission to the royal will. The Hague was full of exulting royalists and anxious converts, all eager for a word or a smile or a glance from the King.

Charles saw them all, and among others upon whom he smiled was a young woman named Barbara Palmer, daughter of an old royalist family which had suffered for the Stuarts as much as most. She was of that voluptuous but fragile type of beauty which was fashionable in an era when the women of the people were apt to be improperly nourished and broken by early drudgery. Her skin was extremely fine, her complexion excellent, her boldly regular features animated by the play of uncontrolled passions, her tall figure lavishly but gracefully curved in the substantial manner which the age admired. She lived solely for the attentions of men.

She was the wife of a young man of the law who had been a useful royalist messenger. They had followed her lover, the Earl of Chesterfield, to whom she had been attached since she was fifteen, when he fled from England after a killing. Now he and his mistress were prominent figures in the happy, bustling court, while Mr. Palmer remained discreetly in the background. Barbara found instant favour in the eyes of her sovereign, but during the tumultuous gayety of those few weeks before the Restoration, their intimacy provoked little comment.

The last political doubts were soon resolved. Parliament met, proclaimed that England was and always had been a monarchy, and then Monk produced Charles' declarations, whose gracious tone quite swept the Houses off their feet. There was hardly a suggestion of conditions. The only debate was over what forms the acknowledgment should take. Within a few days a delegation was on its way to bring his Majesty home, and Katherine Philips, who was disgracing the sacred name of woman by daring to write poetry for publication, but upon whom the nation was secretly proud to bestow the title of "The Matchless Orinda," was declaiming:

Hasten, great prince, unto the British Isles
Or all thy subjects will become exiles.
To thee they flock; thy presence is their home,
As Pompey's camp, where'er it moved, was Rome.

An impressive fleet sailed for The Hague with the delegation to escort the returning monarch becomingly. It carried, besides many of England's great men under the lead of General Montague, a chest containing £50,000 in gold pieces, Parliament's gift to the King. When it was opened before him, Charles could not contain his gleeful excitement. He shouted for James and Mary to come and see the money. He ran his fingers through it. He ordered presents for all his family. For a few moments he quite lost his royal dignity. Now he knew that these last weeks had not been a dream, and in the shining, bright, golden reality he saw the future of his Kingship.

Thirteen

DAZZLED by sudden glory, importuned by hungry place seekers, besieged by humble folk who asked no more than to kiss his hand, led by every admirer to believe that he had at a bound achieved unlimited power and fortune, Charles lived these last days abroad in a rose-coloured haze shot through with golden beams. He savoured with the relish of a gourmet long deprived of his favourite dish the taste of royalty. But he did not by any means become " seared with majestie." Even Presbyterians praised his affability as he permitted them to crowd about him, his usually harsh, sullen features losing all their heaviness in a smile of peaceful happiness. In the sudden rush of unleashed royalist enthusiasm, the slightest regal grace was magnified until all men were crying that they had a monarch who was a paragon of perfection.

They did not stop to consider the inevitable effects of fourteen years of exile upon the man whom they expected to take up the royal manner where civil wars had interrupted. England was willing to forget the past; so was Charles, and it seemed to the unthinking celebrants that there could, therefore, be nothing to prevent the return of the good old days, which were of course remembered as much better than they had ever been.

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Both the country and the man had changed. The England to which Charles was returning could never go back to the old way of willing submission to royal authority. The people had lost the habit, much as they were content to shout themselves hoarse for their King. He for his part had clung to the one political conviction which was the heritage and the training of his family — that a King should rule. In that he was even more set than if the civil wars had never been fought. And in that he was a true monarch of the old school.

However, fourteen years of disillusionment, disappointment, petty intrigues and poverty had given him a view of the world which no ruler secure upon his throne could ever acquire. For years he had listened to men promising largely, boastfully what they would do for their King. And they had done nothing but squander his inadequate income and quarrel about their honour. He had been treated with contempt by everyone to whom he could be of no help and exploited pitilessly by those who could use him. It was these very men, he had observed, who talked the most about honesty and loyalty and religion and altruism and all the other fine ideals. In watching from the bleak vantage ground of his impotence, Charles had reached his own private opinion of these ideals, and his thick lips curled in scorn when he heard them mentioned. They could never take him in again. Every man was out for himself, and Charles had learned in a hard school to be as other men.

Along with contempt for men's professions, he had developed the faculty of judging shrewdly and unkindly the individuals who made them. He was sure men practised virtues out of self interest or vanity. He did not believe anyone served the throne for love or out of principle.

"And so," observed Bishop Burnet, "he was quits with all the world and loved others as little as he thought they loved him."

His humiliating reign in Scotland, his adventures as a serving man in England, his wanderings as an exile on the Continent had enabled him to see mankind stripped of the pretences with which it normally approached royalty. Consequently he was able to appraise the pretences accurately.

One certain refuge he had found from care and trouble and the shameless rascality of his fellows. The pleasures of the senses had never failed him yet. He put his faith in the charms of a beautiful woman without laying himself open to unhappiness by expecting her love, and nothing happened to justify the croaking of the Puritans who hated pleasure as much as he loved it. The same principle, he had found, applied to physical exercise, a well stocked table, the chemical laboratory, the theatre, a lively verbal contest of wits, all sorts of inconsequential frivolities upon which the good Hyde frowned as interfering with his sacred business.

Yet the consciousness of royal dignity, the cynicism, the sharpened wits, the distrust of human motives, the pursuit of pleasure had left undiminished the King's generosity, good nature and tolerance. Indeed his reputation for forgiving injuries was so notorious that Monk offered to save the life of Sir Arthur Haselrig, one of the most prominent die-hard republicans, for twopence. Haselrig later paid.

There was little genuine love for humanity in the displays of royal benevolence. Charles had a morbid dislike of being surrounded by gloomy faces, and he hated himself whenever he had to refuse a request. It was much easier to give, or at least to promise, and he had seen too much of deception to worry about a little lie. He made God in his own image — a gentleman — very different from the terrible deity the Calvinist Scots had evolved out of the Old Testament. He declared that his Lord " would not make a man miserable only for taking a little pleasure out of the way." His experience with the men who had considered it their duty to remould his soul on the Puritan model had given him his one desire to proselyte. He sometimes tried to convert people he liked from Presbyterianism, " for," he would say, " it is not a religion for gentlemen." He had a phenomenal memory, and his Scottish adventures had sunk so deeply into it that one of Monk's emissaries to Holland wrote:

" I wondered to heare him speak of all the passages and things whyl he was in Scotland with as full a remembrance and exact knowledge as if they had been recently acted, and he had latly come from thence."

The agent was so greatly impressed with his Majesty's feats of memory and general air of ability that he added:

" He is indeed a most excellent prince, admirably improven by his long afflictions."

Everyone agreed. In atrocious verse and equally impossible prose, the most extravagant eulogies of the restored monarch were pouring from the presses which had so recently been confined within the sober limits of Puritan theology. Five million Englishmen united with the matchless Orinda in crying for their sovereign, and Andrew Marvel, a better poet than Mrs. Philips, found in the general fervour inspiration for the lines

Of a tall stature and of sable hue,
Much like the son of Kish, that lofty Jew,

Twelve years compleat he suffered in exile
And kept his Father's Asses all the while.
At length by wonderful impulse of fate,
The people call him home to help the state;
And what is more they send him money too,
And clothe him all from head to foot anew.

In the new clothes and with the gold carefully stowed away in his cabin, Charles embarked on a beautiful May morning to answer his people's call. An extravagantly joyous crew of courtiers attended him on board the battleship Naseby, which he promptly renamed the Royal Charles. The glorious sensation of living his fondest dreams was still his. He paced the deck proudly, telling an open-mouthed audience which included Montague's young secretary, Samuel Pepys, the true story of his escape after the battle of Worcester. He told a tale well, omitting nothing of the ludicrous or the romantic. When he had finished this saga, he had an hundred anecdotes of his exile which he delighted to relate as sincerely as his hearers rejoiced to listen. His memory for detail was so great that Lord Wilmot's son, the young Earl of Rochester, once marvelled that his Majesty could recollect so well every incident of his pet yarns, yet not remember that he had told it to the same audience half a dozen times. A less impudent observer was equally struck, remarking:

"He was an everlasting talker. He told his stories with a good grace, but they came in his way too often."

On board the Royal Charles such remarks would never have occurred to anyone. Even the most banal sentences would have been treasured by these men who were proud to be taking part in an historic event, and were enchanted with their sovereign's condescension in talking to them so intimately. He completed the conquest of their hearts by refusing to dine in state in his cabin, preferring informal conversation and a regular seaman's food.

As the fleet came into Dover harbour, the sands were black with people come to watch the King set foot on English soil. But there was little ceremony here. Charles came ashore to find Monk at the head of a crowd of distinguished citizens to welcome him. The General dropped to his knees before the man he had restored to three thrones, but the King graciously raised him, thanked him for his services and conferred a knighthood as earnest of his intentions to do more. Then his Majesty was hurried away through lanes of cheering people to begin a triumphal progress towards London. He did the proper thing by the civic officials of Dover and then took the road for Canterbury, meeting on the way many of the troops of cavalry that had ridden against him at Worcester. But now they pressed their lips to the hilts of their sabres and waved the blades in salute as he passed.

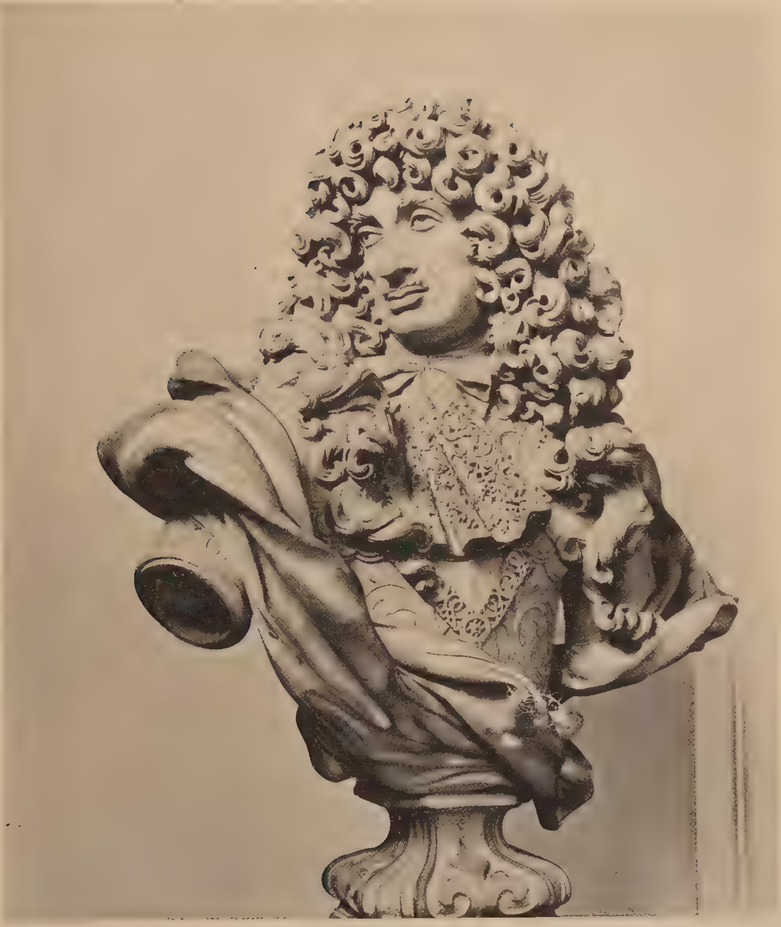
" I was so tormented with businesse at The Hague," Charles wrote to his sister Henriette from Canterbury, " that I could not write to you before my departure, but I left orders with my sister to send you a small present from me, which I hope you will soon receave. I arrived yesterday at Dover, where I found Monk with a great number of the nobility, who almost overwhelmed me with kindnesse and joy for my returne. My head is so dreadfully stunned with the acclamations of the people and the vast amount of businesse, that I know not whether I am writing sense or nonsense. Therefore pardon me if I say no more than that I am entirely yours."

The deafening acclamations of the people were to continue until he became inured to them. At Rochester he rode through streets hung with garlands, silk scarves and ribbons which the loyal citizenry had adorned with all their gold chains and jewels. Their expressions of joy stunned him only for the moment. He recovered quickly and reflected, most unflatteringly to his faithful subjects, on the probable age and duration of their loyalty.

"It must surely have been my fault," he said, "that I did not come before, for I have met with no one today who did not protest that he always wished for my restoration."

It did appear to be his own fault, especially when he entered London, where all the wealth and culture in England were centred. Charles rode into his capital on his birthday, and the rejoicings far surpassed those that had marked his advent into the world just thirty years ago. Fountains ran with wine; the narrow streets were lined with people, streamers and banners; the guns of the Tower were being fired as rapidly as if they had been repelling a foreign foe.

Charles looked about him curiously, for he was less familiar with London than with most of the cities of the Continent. It was the London of Elizabeth, hardly changed since Tudor days and such changes as there were being for the worse. St. Paul's dominated the city, its much admired bulk rising high on Ludgate Hill. The handsomest buildings — mostly former religious institutions but now the homes of wealthy guilds and merchant companies — were almost lost to view in a close tangle of hovels where the majority of London's half million souls were crowded in dirt and misery. The better streets were abominably paved; the rest were mere pools of mud and filth. Most of the houses were of wood and many of them sheltered objectionable industries. Within the walls which still encircled the City were tanneries, soap boilers, breweries and lime burners, all sending their smoke and smells through the



Charles II at 33

"The easiest Prince and best bred man alive."

town. Everyone crowded as close as possible to the river, the great highway of London, thronged with wherries, skiffs and barges, as important to the City's life as the Grand Canal to Venice. Of recent years the walls had grown too small for the population, and slums as noisome as anything within the City proper had grown up in the districts just outside, known as the " liberties " of London.

Charles came into this strange place at the head of a triumphal procession. With an instinctive flair for the happy touches which endear a King to common mortals and make him the bane of serious men who try to run formal ceremonies on a schedule, he stopped the whole show at the King's Head Tavern to greet his newest subject. The landlord's wife had been delivered of a child as he approached, an incident of which rhymesters were later to make ribald use. Leaving the humble folk at the Tavern stunned by the royal courtesy, the procession wound its way on through the city, out along the peaceful Strand, unusually crowded by sightseers this day, to Whitehall. The twenty thousand paraders had taken seven hours to pass through the flower-strewn, tapestry-hung streets, attended by music, cheered from the windows by all the women in London, watched by thousands who, like John Evelyn, " beheld it and blessed God."

Charles found Whitehall prepared for his reception as nearly as it could be in the manner which he vaguely remembered from his childhood. This task had fallen to Mrs. Monk, who superintended the preparations with characteristic vigour and thrift. She had bought new bed linen, but insisted on getting wholesale prices. In the handsome rooms of the rambling series of houses which constituted Whitehall, the King went through the last weary ceremonies while Monk, released after the first part of the program, was in tears at his lodgings, exclaiming with the fervour he had learned in Cromwell's army:

" It was not I that did this. It was God alone who did it; to Him be the glory, whose is the kingdom and the power of this and all governments."

Monk's new master was less inclined to give ostentatious credit to divine powers. Such a devotional exercise had been arranged with due pomp for Westminster Abbey, but Charles professed himself far too worn out by the day of rejoicing to go through any more ceremonies. He gave hasty thanks to the Lord in an improvised chapel at Whitehall and sought his royal couch, which he shared that night with Barbara Palmer.

Fourteen

THE next morning in the twelfth year of his reign King Charles the Second began to take his government into his own hands. He started with a royal proclamation directing magistrates to punish severely "vicious, debauched and prophane persons who on pretence of regard for the King revile and threaten others, or spend their time in taverns and tippling houses, drinking his health."

Charles was determined that his happiness in his new powers should not be marred by persecutions. He frowned in his harshest manner on those who reviled others for their past offences. But it was beyond the power of any monarch to check the tippling. Men had been held from enjoyment too long not to welcome with excess the return of liberty and monarchy. The reaction had set in before Charles landed at Dover, and the last official gasp of Puritanism appeared in the Journals:

"Ordered, that the Speaker in the name of the House and of all the Commons of England, whom they do represent, render unto his Majesty their hearty and humble thanks for his gracious, pious and seasonable Proclamation against Prophaneness."

From then on the manners of the common people were left to themselves. Other problems demanded more immediate attention. There was the task of making London a fit place for gentlemen, the restoration of the Church of England to its old authority, the impossibility of fulfilling all the promises so blithely made in misfortune, the delicate work of disbanding Cromwell's Ironsides, against whom the country grumbled and in whose presence the monarchy could never be easy. There were Cromwell's enormous debts to be considered and repudiated. There were Charles' own promissory notes, which were presented by the hundred for payment. There were his father's old debts. A whole new administrative machinery had to be built up. Something must be done for the encouragement of trade, which had fallen into stagnation. Ireland could be safely entrusted to the capable, honest Ormonde, but Scotland needed as great a reorganization as England.

Besides the plain business of ruling, there was all the formal embroidery of royalty to be gone through. Three and four and sometimes more delegations appeared at Whitehall every day with fulsome declarations of loyalty and affection which had to be listened to. They also brought gifts of plate and money which, the news sheets invariably reported, "his Majesty was graciously pleased to accept." Hundreds of influential citizens called for no better purpose than to kiss the royal hand, and Charles accommodated them in such numbers that Mr. Evelyn wondered he found time to eat.

Another duty of royalty was the unpleasant one of touching for scrofula, which had been given the name of the "King's evil" not because kings had it but because they were supposed to be able to cure it. An elaborate ceremony had been evolved through centuries of usage, and one day not long after the Restoration, the Parliamentary Journal announced that "the Kingdom having been for a long time troubled with the evil by reason of his Majesty's absence" a day had been set for the cure.

On that day Charles sat under a canopy in the Banquetting Hall, heard prayers and ordered the sick led before him. They came one by one, kneeling at his feet while he laid his hands upon each face. Two hundred and fifty were thus "touched" on the first day — in later years he handled as many as six hundred at a sitting — and then came round again to receive from the royal hands the "angel," a small gold coin worth about ten shillings, which was part of the cure. Charles' vigilant eye detected one cheat who had not been touched but had shuffled into the line to get the money. Each sufferer received in addition to the angel a bit of good advice from his Majesty, an innovation of Charles' own. He told them to keep clean and wash their sores often. As many of them were suffering from pediculosis and general dirtiness, there was such a large percentage of cures that men came all the way from the New World to be touched, and on his walks the King was often assaulted by the victims of all sorts of loathsome ailments who would seize his hand and press it to their sores.

Quite as revolting as this sort of thing, Charles thought, were the intrigues for jobs. Life-long cavaliers competed for every place with Presbyterian and Independent rebels whose recent conversion entitled them to consideration. Already Monk had terrified Hyde and alarmed Charles by presenting a bit of paper on which he had written the names of men he would like to see in the Privy Council, the nearest approach to a Cabinet which the British government then boasted. There were seventy names on the list, and hardly a one that did not belong to a man who up to a year ago had been calling Charles Stuart a profligate and a traitor. Hyde rushed off to consult the General, and it all turned out well. The names were only those of men whom Monk had promised to recommend for the Council, and he did not expect the King to appoint any of them. So Charles named his own, thirty lords and baronets about evenly divided between cavaliers and former roundheads. Hyde, as Lord Chancellor and admittedly the King's right hand, dominated the board, but for the most part it registered only formal decisions.

The work of remodelling society was one Charles found most congenial. The old etiquette was restored at Whitehall. His Majesty dined in state, served by appropriate noblemen while ladies and gentlemen watched from the gallery. Violins played the brisk tunes of which Charles was so fond and for which he kept dunning friends abroad. After dinner the latest dances from Paris and the old dances of England were tripped gayly by men and women splendidly attired. The women, in billowing gowns which left arms and bosoms bare, were less gorgeously dressed than the men, whose curled perruques, plumes, silks and laces, velvet robes trimmed with furs and splashed with jewels were much admired after the sober garb of the Commonwealth. Singing, love making and gambling were the order of the night, while during the day there were tennis and pall mall and hunting and pleasant sauntering about the gardens. A few weeks after the Restoration, Charles licensed two theatres, and the drama, driven into holes and corners by Puritan hatred of the stage, emerged in a splendour which it had never known before.

With the King setting the pace, good manners and witty conversation became the passports into society, and the manners were pardoned if the wit was keen enough. His Majesty set the score for the whole court, and under "the easiest Prince and best bred man alive," as Rochester called him, Englishmen became adepts at the game of clever repartee. The winners basked in the sun of royal favour and carried off the honours he was always glad to bestow upon brains which did not take themselves too seriously. The courtiers became very proud of their standards of life and of their King, although Marvel complained:

> Bishops and Deans, Peers, pimps and knights he made,
> Things highly fitting for a monarch's trade.

That attitude, however, was not yet expressed. In the summer of 1660, all was harmony and good spirits. They were such idyllic days that the Publick Intelligencer could boast:

" There is no strife betwixt the city and the country but who shall show most duty to the King."

The other problems of a restored monarchy were neither as easy nor as much fun to solve. Hyde, devout churchman that he was, gave good advice on religious questions, and the new reformation went on comparatively smoothly but with a great deal of competition for bishoprics and deaneries. There was great theological controversy too over the new prayer book which was being prepared for the restored Church and which gave Charles' intimates some amusement by referrring to him as " our most religious King." Charles, however, took no part in the debates, although he had to approve the finished product. His only contribution to the religion of his people was an attempt to have his favourite instrumental music adopted in church services, but it was considered too frivolous and was abandoned. Thereafter the King made his appearance regularly in church, but such benefit as he derived from it is indicated in a letter to Minette:

" We have the same disease of Sermons that you complaine of there, but I hope you have the same convenience that the rest of the family has of sleeping out most of the time, which is a great ease to those who are bounde to heare them," and which permitted him to be quite cheerful when announcing: " I am going to hear little Ken tell me of my faults."

Another problem, the disbanding of the army, was also accomplished with less trouble than was anticipated. Cromwell had maintained his forces at the unprecedented strength of thirty thousand men and it was the nation's chief grievance. Parliament scraped together some of their pay, which was months in arrears, and Charles by borrowing £900,000 more from bankers managed to send them all home with enough money to set them up in trade or on farms. Many cavaliers were fearful that at the last moment the Ironsides would rebel against giving up the power they had had in the state, but the Protector had trained them well, and they went peaceably, even joyfully, to their homes. The country returned to the military establishment to which it had been accustomed before the wars — a few troops of guards for the King and two or three thousand men scattered in various garrisons about the land.

The disbanding of the army brought Charles in touch with the most delicate of all his problems, the one with which he seemed to have been struggling all his life. There was no money. His dreams of an income which would enable him to do as he liked and hang the expense had been sadly exaggerated. The £50,000 sent to him in Holland raised hopes which the financial condition of England was far from justifying. Charles returned to his throne to find that the national exchequer contained just eleven pounds, two shillings and tenpence. Furthermore, the House of Commons seemed in no hurry to do anything about it. So little had the King's condition been changed from the poverty of exile that three months after his Restoration he was obliged to address Parliament on the subject. He wrung £70,000 from them by his good-humoured account of his condition.

" I have not so much money in my purse as when I came to you," he told them frankly. " The truth is I have lived principally ever since upon what I brought with me. Nor have I been able to give my brothers a shilling since I came into England, nor to keep any table in my house but what I eat myself. And that which troubles me most is to see so many of you come to me at Whitehall and to think you must go somewhere else to seek your dinner."

Much as he liked money to spend, Charles had never been in the habit of worrying about the lack of it. He had learned how to borrow. His chief concern in these first months of Kingship was the fear that his Parliament was going to drive him to take more vengeance upon past offences than he desired. With the Church, the army, the revenue, trade and the state of the nation in general to worry them, the Houses would spend their time wrangling about what classes of men should be exempted from the Indemnity Bill which was being prepared in accordance with the King's promise at Breda. Ardent royalists argued fiercely that all men who had ever borne arms against royalty should be left to the justice of the courts. Their debates kept the country in a state of uneasy apprehension which Charles was not slow to observe. He was annoyed that his subjects were not as ready to forgive as he was. He thought he had been more injured than anyone else, even though others had spent years in prison, in hiding, in exile and in poverty. He had been kept from his throne, and in his opinion nothing could be worse than that. The vengeful spirit of his own followers disgusted him, but he was not unduly surprised by one more exhibition of human meanness. However, this was the trait to which he most objected, for, as he once wrote:

" I am of those biggots who thinke that malice is a much greater sinn then a poore frailty of nature."

Feeling as strongly as he did on this subject, he tried to prod Parliament into keeping to the spirit of his Declaration. Hints and private urgings brought no results, so his Majesty donned his robes of state and paid a formal visit to the House of Lords, which was proving most dilatory. From the throne he explained to them that he had never thought of excepting from full, free pardon anyone but his father's murderers. In his sincerity he even forgot his grammar, declaring earnestly to the House:

" My lords, if you do not join with me in extinguishing this fear which keeps the hearts of men awake and apprehensive of safety and security, you keep me from performing my promise, which if I had not made, I am persuaded neither I nor you had been nowhere."

He knew better than to appeal to their mercy, but he thought they might be amenable to an appeal to reason. He stressed the desirability of peace and the prosperity which could only be recovered if these men who walked in fear were forgiven.

" It will make them good subjects to me and good friends and neighbours to you," he added, " and we have then our end, and you shall find this the surest expedient to prevent future mischief."

Such plain speaking from the throne was enough to put a stop to all talk of proscriptions and violence. The Bill of Indemnity and Oblivion for Past Offences was passed, exempting from its terms only those who had participated in the fatal High Court of Justice. Charles gave his assent to the measure, and within a few days the wits, who observed that the King was making use of old Puritan officials in many important offices of state, were remarking that it was a bill of indemnity for his Majesty's enemies and oblivion for his friends. It operated so widely that even John Milton, Thurloe's former secretary, who had written more forcefully than anyone against monarchy, came out of his hiding. He was actually permitted to go unmolested about the town and write " Paradise Lost " in peace.

The popular craving for blood was, however, almost satiated by an offering of the lives of the most prominent regicides who could be caught. Many of the royal martyr's judges were dead. Others had escaped to the Continent or the wilderness of New England. But enough remained for the sort of a spectacle a London crowd most enjoyed. There was no delay in the application of the law. The victims could hardly deny, nor did they desire to do so, their signatures on the warrant for the execution of King Charles the First. Legal technicalities which might prolong their lives were dispensed with and the full sentence, quartering after execution and the exposure of heads and limbs in public places, was exacted. Even the most humane of men rejoiced in the horrid show and the cultured, travelled, benevolent gentleman, Mr. Evelyn, wrote:

" I saw not their execution, but met their quarters, mangled and cut and reeking, as they were brought from the gallows in baskets on the hurdle. Oh, the miraculous providence of God! "

Charles had been obliged to attend the ceremonies, for it would not do that a son should appear so callous as to miss the glorious sight of justice executed upon his father's murderers. But he did not like it. That sort of thing always seemed to him so futile, such a waste and rather unpleasant besides. When the case of nineteen other regicides, arrested but not yet tried, was coming before the Privy Council, he scribbled a note to Hyde:

"I must confesse that I am weary of hanging except upon new offences; let it sleep. You know that I cannot pardon them."

The nineteen miserable lives were spared, and Charles could turn again to the weary details of government, all of which pressed hard upon him, the appointment of judges, the naming of serjeants at law, the awarding of pensions, Church offices, the wording of proposed legislation. Charles' time was in such demand that even Hyde was appalled.

"I am sure you have so many things to thinke of that I wonder you can sleepe," the Chancellor wrote.

Nevertheless, Charles did not forget among all the thousands who clamoured for recognition of past services the minor heroes of the epic of his escape from Worcester, a story which was now being sung in ballads, published in verse and prose, used as the text of sermons. Among the first acts of the new government was the granting of pensions to the Penderells, to Father Hudleston, to Jane Lane and to the others who had risked their lives and resisted temptation to save their rightful lord. Other rewards were apportioned with a nice regard for the services rendered, from the Dukedom of Albemarle and an enormous grant of Crown land for Monk to the Earldom of Castlemaine for a young lawyer, which was thus expressed among the King's notes:

"Prepare a warrant for Mr. Roger Palmer to be an Irish Earle to him and his heirs of his body gotten on Barbara Palmer, his now wife, with the date blanke."

* * *

Charles had learned that Mrs. Palmer was pregnant, and although both her husband and Lord Chesterfield were willing to acknowledge the child, the baby born to Barbara in the following February was called Anne Fitzroy and reared as the King's own.

That deserving individuals and the nation as a whole were given so much attention by a monarch who did not believe in sacrificing pleasure to duty was due to the speed with which Charles reached decisions and to the fact that he was an extremely early riser. He was usually up for a walk in Whitehall gardens not much after dawn no matter how late he had danced or dallied the night before. Sometimes he had his first appointments of the day as early as eight o'clock, a circumstance of which Hyde took so much advantage that Charles complained:

"You give appointments in a morning to others sooner than you take them yourselfe."

His Majesty transacted his business in such unlikely places that many courtiers never knew he had done it. He would hear the merits of some appeal for a place while striding through the Mall at his usual pace, so fast that few men could keep up with him. A grave matter of policy would be discussed during a dance or in a windowseat between songs or while he was being put to bed with the ceremoniousness palace etiquette demanded. The more traditional places for settling affairs of state bored him. When he sat at the head of the Privy Council he thought oftener of Barbara Palmer than of the subject under discussion. While his advisers argued, Charles sat silent, scribbling on bits of paper, carefully twining an intricate B around an even more elaborate C, or exchanging scrawled notes with Hyde on some quite irrelevant subject. At times he nodded or grew impatient for his meals, whereupon the Chancellor would rouse him or pass over such a note as:

" This debate is worth 3 dinners. I beseech you be not weary of it, but attend it with all patience."

The King was in the habit of deferring to Hyde, and he permitted the Chancellor to saddle him with much more of the routine of government than he himself desired or thought necessary. He deferred to the older man in all sorts of ways, so much so that when Mary of Orange came to pay her native country a visit for the first time since she was twelve years old, this exchange of notes took place at the Privy Council:

Charles: I would willingly make a visite to my sister at tunbridge for a night or two at furthest, when do you thinke I can best spare that time?

Hyde: I know no reason why you may not for such a tyme (2 nights) go the next weeke about Wensday or Thursday and returne tyme enough for the adiournment (of Parliament) which yett ought to be the week followinge.

I suppose you will goe with a light Trayne.

Charles: I intend to take nothing but my night bag.

Hyde: You will not go without 40 or 50 horse!

Charles: I counte that part of my night bag.

Mary's visit had come at a time when domestic troubles were added to her brother's cares of state, and they were much more upon his mind than any mere governmental difficulties. In September his favourite brother, Henry, whose cheerful youth had greatly endeared him to all England, died of smallpox after it had been thought he was out of danger.

Then James caused great tribulation in the family circle by confessing that for many months he had been carrying on an affair with Anne Hyde, daughter of the Chancellor. Indeed, he said he had secretly married the girl in Holland before the Restoration. The secret was only now divulged because her pregnancy was apparent. There was a great to-do in which only Charles remained calm, although men tried to tell him his dignity had been offended. Hyde flew into a great fury. He knew he had enough enemies without adding to them by marrying his child to the Duke of York. They were already maliciously referring to his influence over the King by calling him " Edward the Seventh " and he nervously anticipated such attacks as actually came when they could accuse him of trying to put his descendants on the throne.

Charles had sent Ormonde and the Earl of Southampton, both old friends of the father, to break the news. Hyde was so angry he declared he would " turn her out of his house as a Strumpet," but he only confined her to her room, and neglected to guard her closely enough to keep James from paying visits. However, he did curse the girl with all the vigour of a seventeenth century vocabulary enriched by theological reading, or, as he himself expressed it, " broke out into a very immoderate Passion against the Wickedness of his Daughter." If it was true, he said, that she was really married, he was for sending her to the Tower and impeaching her of high treason. He was ready to move the impeachment himself in the House of Commons.

" He had much rather his daughter should be the Duke's Whore than his Wife," he wrote years later. " In the former case Nobody could blame him for the Resolution he had taken (to turn her out of his house) for he was not obliged to keep a Whore for the greatest Prince alive."

Charles was vainly endeavouring to calm the outraged parent when James further complicated matters by denying the marriage. Sudden elevation from a gentleman adventurer to heir to a real throne had turned his head. He had been persuaded by friends that it was beneath his dignity to marry a Hyde. The King became intensely displeased with both his brother and his minister. He had little fondness for James, who was slow of mind, industrious, pedantic and a moralist in his own peculiar fashion. Charles never approved of secrecy in love affairs; it indicated a shame which for him took all the fun out of an amour. In any case he did not propose to have his brother seducing by means of false promises the daughters of men to whom the family owed so much. But he made it plain that it was the lie, not the seduction, to which he objected. He ordered Hyde to give the girl her liberty, which was not done, and told James he would have to marry her. He laughed at the Chancellor's plan to cut Anne's head off and showered marks of confidence upon him, including a present of £20,000 and a warrant for a barony.

Meanwhile the news crossed the Channel, and his mother sent indignant messages that her son should not be allowed to disgrace the family by marrying so far beneath him. Some of James's friends undertook to save him by swearing that they had enjoyed Anne's favours since her supposed marriage to the Duke. Sir Charles Berkley, one of James's suite, even offered to marry her himself. But the King only grew more determined and annoyed. He forced Berkley and the others to admit they lied and Anne was formally acknowledged as Duchess of York. It was characteristic of James that he was ever afterwards greatly under his wife's influence, but still retained as his closest friends the men who had libelled her. Hyde's gloomy prophecies of his own unpopularity as a result of the marriage, which was to give two queens to England, were fulfilled. For a time there was a tremendous circulation of some verses which included the lines

> Then the Fat Scrivener doth begin to think
> 'Twas time to mix the Royal blood with ink.

Charles had hoped to find relief from these vexations in Mary's visit. He planned that they would repeat the happy days of six years before in Germany, but this time he would pay the bills. Henrietta Maria and the eighteen-year-old Minette also came over for the festivities and the Stuart family was united for the first time in years. Charles took great delight in showing his sisters the wonders of Whitehall, the curiosities and artistic treasures which were gradually being assembled again after their dispersion by the Commonwealth. For a few weeks they were all very merry, but just when they were planning the most elaborate, gay Christmas festivities London had seen in years, the Princess of Orange fell ill of smallpox. Charles spent hours with her, but she grew rapidly worse and died, leaving her royal brother in tears but too busy to mourn long.

However, Christmas proved a dismal one at Whitehall, and the week which for the rest of England was a great celebration in the joy of being rid of Puritan restrictions, passed for Charles quite naturally into the national day of fasting on the anniversary of his father's execution. On this occasion sacrifices were thrown to the mob. All London crowded to see the bodies of Cromwell, Bradshaw and Ireton dragged from their stately tombs in the Abbey and hung in their shrouds at Tyburn. All day the three corpses dangled in their chains — " Oh, the stupendous and inscrutable judgments of God! " exclaimed Mr. Evelyn — and thousands came to view them before they were taken down and buried ignominiously at the foot of the gallows.

It was a lesson in the vanity of human dignities and pretensions which, it appears, was lost upon Charles. For in addition to everything else he had now to think of finding himself a wife.

Fifteen

FROM the moment of the Restoration, the King who had wooed so often and so vainly during his exile had been courted on behalf of nearly every unmarried Princess in Europe. The diplomacy of Continental courts had been agitated for months. It was high time to end this suspense and give his people a Queen.

However, Charles was not willing to sink all personal preferences in accordance with the royal tradition which decrees that a King must marry for the good of the State, and for that alone. He had no positive choice; his limitations were strictly negative; he definitely refused to marry any of the women who had refused him in his days of adversity, although he might now have had any of them. This considerably narrowed the field of eligibles, and he reduced it still further by rejecting the German princesses in a body. He had seen most of them in the course of his wanderings along the Rhine, and in describing them he used his favourite, almost his only oath — he was too well able to express himself to need profanity. When several Germans were proposed to him he cried:

"Odd's fish, I could not marry one of them; they are all dull and foggy."

Another candidate was the Infanta of Portugal, Catherine of Braganza. Even before Charles had arrived in England, the Portuguese Ambassador had made overtures to Monk for a marriage which under the implicit terms of such royal contracts would give Portugal English support in her struggle to maintain her independence of Spain. The negotiations were resumed when Charles had settled in Whitehall. Portugal offered as dowry half a million pounds, the sovereignty of Bombay and Tangiers and a concession for English ships to trade freely with Brazil and the Portuguese East Indies. It was a magnificent offer and would enable Charles not only to repair his own fortunes but to do something for the nation's commerce. Bombay provided England its first, much needed foothold in India while Tangiers was reported to assure its possessor complete control of the Mediterranean. When these points were brought out during a discussion of the match, Hyde noted that " his Majesty seemed very much affected." As early as November, 1660, Charles had decided to encourage the Portuguese advances, and one day wrote a polite message to Catherine's mother, which he showed first to Hyde with the note:

" I send you heere my Letter that is for the Queene of Portugal, 'tis the worst Spanish that ever was writt."

By this time Spain had become alarmed at the prospect of England in alliance with what Madrid insisted on regarding as a rebellious province. The Spanish Ambassador at London tried hard to break off the negotiations. He declared the Infanta was deformed and incapable of bearing children, he extolled the charms of several Italian princesses, and finally he announced that if the negotiations continued, he had orders to declare war. This last was a little too much for Charles in his new dignity and power. He replied that the Ambassador might leave the country when he liked; the King of England took no orders from the King of Spain. The envoy moderated his tone and his Portuguese colleague, the Count da Ponte, brought a portrait of Catherine to refute the aspersions cast upon the Infanta's looks.

"That person cannot be unhandsome," Charles exclaimed when he saw the picture.

He had made up his mind, but the Spanish Ambassador still had a card to play. In an effort to rouse public opinion against the match he published and distributed the memorials which he had presented to the King concerning the undesirability of Catherine as a wife. Charles was stung to one of his rare displays of anger, and ordered the Ambassador to leave the country. The negotiations proceeded smoothly after that, and in the spring of 1661, Charles could consider himself betrothed.

At the same time he could consider himself truly a crowned head. The ceremony of coronation, to which he attached more importance than the ceremony of marriage, was held in April. The royal regalia, broken up or sold by the Commonwealth, had at last been replaced, and a program had been arranged far more splendid than the dreary round of a prayer at Scone ten years before. This coronation was preceded by the usual honours list — the Earldom of Clarendon for Hyde at the head of it.

For two days his Majesty lived in robes of crimson and purple of such richness, weight, and complexity that he could hardly move in them. On the first morning his royal procession wound in a splendour which it was part of his policy to have associated with monarchy in the public mind, through freshly gravelled, unaccustomedly smooth streets from the Tower to Westminster. Thousands of men rode in the line, and the exhibitionism of young horsemen was curbed by an order that no man should dare introduce an unruly mount. The nobility competed magnificently in the richness of their costumes for the occasion, and gave as much attention to their attendant gentlemen, pages and footmen as to themselves. Buckingham declared that he had spent £30,000 to make a proper show at the coronation, and even the old Puritan, Lord Wharton, laid out £8,000. All London and everyone who could come up from the country crowded the roofs and windows along the line of march to watch the flood of gorgeous costumes stream along through the four triumphal arches representing monarchy triumphing over rebellion, a naval battle in which England conquered her foes, a Temple of Concord and a Garden of Plenty. A happy roar rolling slowly westward marked the slow passage of King Charles in the midst of the procession.

That night London feasted and next day as much of it as could get in was at the Abbey for the elaborate, symbolic ceremonies of the actual coronation in which prayers mingled with the assumption by his Majesty of the orb, sceptre, spurs, crown and other regalia of royalty. Then, clad in purple velvet trimmed with ermine, the King proceeded under a canopy held by the sixteen Barons of the Cinque Ports to Westminster Hall for his coronation dinner, served to him at a table of state placed high above the lower orders.

Before the banquet began, Sir Edward Dymock, mounted on a white charger, rode in with a great clatter, and flinging down a gauntlet three times, he three times challenged to mortal combat anyone who doubted Charles' rights to the throne. Then the courses were brought up, attended by men on horseback and afoot, but the King partook only of two before he left the Hall, shifted out of the cumbersome robes and went home to Whitehall by barge through a thunderstorm which put an end to two days of glorious April sunshine, miraculously granted by a beneficent Providence for the procession and coronation ceremonies. Only one untoward incident marred the smooth proceedings. This came when the King's footmen tried to wrest the canopy from the barons, and a struggling group pulled at it all down the length of Westminster Hall. The tussle did not end until the King sent an equerry to arrest the footmen, who were later dismissed in a body.

Two weeks later Charles met the first Parliament of his own summoning. In December he had dissolved the " convention " which had called him back to this throne — it could hardly be called a Parliament since it had not been summoned by royal warrant. The new one, elected in the full flush of royalist revival and the reaction from Puritanism was overwhelmingly, enthusiastically ready to do the King's bidding, but woefully inexperienced in the business of government. The members were mostly young men, and when Charles was twitted with having a Parliament of boys, he replied that he would keep them until they got beards. In his speech from the throne, he greeted them with the announcement of his engagement to Catherine of Braganza, and the news was heard with a hum of approval.

The Houses and the nation were so convinced that they were entering upon a blissful period of history that it did not seem quite too absurd that near Warwick the Lord was pleased to repeat the favour he had shown his Chosen People and shower manna upon Englishmen. An investigator, sent out from sceptical London, confirmed the report.

Over an extensive countryside, he wrote, a light rain of a mysterious grain resembling wheat had fallen.

“God make us thankful for this miraculous blessing,” he added.

But he had the true scientific spirit. He continued his investigations, and a repetition of the miracle provided him with the rational explanation. Enormous flocks of starlings, which had been feeding on ivy berries, had been passing overhead and they had been unable to digest the tiny, hard kernels inside the berries.

While this phenomenon was attracting the attention of the scientists, Charles was regarding himself as a married man. He wrote in his own hand to the Infanta, couching the letter in the fulsome phrases she would expect. It had been prepared by a better Spanish scholar than himself, and he amended none of the phrases put before him when he copied:

“My Lady and Wife:

“Already at my request the good Count da Ponte has set off for Lisbon; for me the signing of the marriage act has been great happiness; and there is about to be dispatched at this time after him one of my servants, charged with what would appear necessary, whereby may be declared on my part the inexpressible joy of this felicitous conclusion which when received will hasten the coming of your Majesty.

“I am going to make a short progress into some of my provinces; in the meantime, whilst I go from my most sovereign good, yet I do not complain as to whither I go, seeking in vain tranquillity in my restlessness, hoping to see the beloved person of your Majesty in these kingdoms, already your own, and that with the same anxiety with which after my long banishment I desired to see myself within them. The presence of your Serenity is only wanting to unite us, under the protection of God, in the health and content I desire.

"The very faithful husband of your Majesty, whose hand he kisses.

Charles Rex."

He managed, however, to conceal his impatience from the world. He had a year to wait before his bride arrived in England, and he spent the time very pleasantly. He had organized the government of England so that all the worrying, or nearly all, fell to other men while he and Hyde retained the power of final decisions. The new Lord Clarendon was given a free hand in internal politics, administration and Church reorganization. Charles kept to himself the direction of foreign policy and the most delicate, most congenial task of them all, the establishment of monarchy firmly in the hearts of Englishmen, too many of whom still held the dour republican views of the Commonwealth. Otherwise state affairs were not troublesome, and for the moment there was even an illusion of wealth. Parliament had voted the King £1,200,000 a year for the rest of his life and the sum was considered generous since it had only to cover the normal expenses of government and the King's Household. Neither Charles nor the Parliament yet knew that the taxes levied would not bring in nearly the estimated amount and that even if they had, it would have been barely sufficient to support the administration under the strictest economy.

Strict economy, however, was no part of Charles' program. His Majesty gave very little thought to money, save for the spending of it, as he rode the crest of the wave of popularity which he managed to keep augmenting steadily. The country rejoiced in his good nature, his urbanity, his wit, his generosity and was even proud of his taste in women. Barbara, Lady Castlemaine, was admired for her beauty by more loyal subjects than detested her greed, lasciviousness and supposed baneful influence upon her royal lover.

The news letters, the gazettes, the friendly missives which went out into the country describing life in the capital made it clear to Englishmen that their King was setting the social tone of the nation. On his progresses through the provinces, they could see for themselves how greatly it was due to his influence that life had become gayer, happier, more carefree for all of them. They did not realize that he only led a reaction; they credited him with having originated it.

Charles was quite willing to let them think so. In fact he shared their belief and tried to live up to it. It was the sort of thing royalty should do. And it was invaluable to the monarchy's popularity. The very men who thought it fitting to express disapproval of the King's amours, laziness, irreverence and boon companions could not altogether conceal their pride in a ruler whose very vices could divert his people. The court gave them a great deal about which to talk, write scandal, sing bawdy songs, repeat ribald jests. To his Majesty's love of amusement, they owed an unprecedented blossoming of the theatre, a revival of light literature, sports and a code of manners which permitted all men — and all women too — to indulge their most vagrant fancies, so long as the fancies were merry.

None of the gay courtiers who helped their master dazzle the populace, none of the elder statesmen who clustered in a grave, disapproving group around Clarendon realized how badly their new Queen had been prepared for the life into which she was to step. She was nearly twenty-four, but she had not set foot outside her mother's palace and the convent where she was educated more than a dozen times in her life, and not once in the last five years. She had been designed from infancy to marry into the English royal family, but she had not been taught a word of English. She had been trained only in piety, chastity and formality, all qualities heartily despised at Whitehall. But in common with most young women of Europe she regarded Charles as one of the great heroes of the age, a Prince who had suffered unjustly and won his rights only after the most romantic struggles. She was quite prepared to adore him.

There was a long delay before she set sail for England. It did not make for harmony when she got there, because it was the result of a lengthy dispute over her cash dowry. Portugal was too poor to pay what she had promised, and wanted to make up the difference in sugar and spices. Pepys' patron, now Earl of Sandwich, had been sent to Lisbon to bring his Queen home, and he was forced at last to accept the Portuguese explanations. But payment in kind was so unsatisfactory that for the rest of Charles' life he kept trying to collect the balance due him. Finally, however, Catherine left for her new home, and she was at sea when Charles wrote to Clarendon:

" I thinke we have not yett thought of the manner of my marriage, it will be necessary we meete about it."

" It was so longe since it was thought of that it may be forgotten," the Chancellor retorted. " You must have a Bpp. with you, and he must marry you before you goe to bedd, and she is prepared to submitt to it as a civill obligac̃on for the legitimac̃on of her children."

" This which you say was quite all out of my minde," replied Charles, who had referred to appropriate display for the wedding rather than legalistic details. " I hope she hath consulted the Jesuites, who are best able to vote a eclesiasticall obligation into a civill one."

" It was the grounde for the pressinge you presently to style her your wife," Clarendon explained, " and that shee be reputed as marryed before she come thence, after she come hither she will do that that is necessary for herselfe and children: you cannot be marryed by a Roman Priest, therefore shee must by a Bpp. of yours."

As Sandwich's fleet and Catherine drew near to Portsmouth, the King, despite the impatience of which he had written her, was one of the least concerned men in the country. Most of his subjects were extremely curious about their Queen, but Charles was not even in Portsmouth to greet her when she landed. He was urging the City to do something about the streets of London so that his wife could ride through them comfortably in a coach and he need not feel ashamed of his capital. Catherine had been several days in England before the King set out for the coast, and now at last he hurried, explaining his haste to Clarendon:

" I shall have one conveniency in it, that if I should fall a sleepe to soone when I come to Portsmouth, I may lay the faulte upon my long iourney."

He arrived at Catherine's lodgings on May twentieth, 1662, to find her in bed with a slight indisposition, surrounded by a bodyguard of the most forbidding women Charles had ever had the misfortune to meet. Catherine's attendants were ugly to a degree which astonished every Englishman who saw them, and they brought into the easy frivolity of the English court, the strict, prudish, dull, extremely complicated etiquette of Lisbon. However, Charles paid little attention to them at this moment, and spent the evening in conversation with his betrothed. He rose early as usual next morning and at eight o'clock was writing to his Chancellor:

"I arrived heere yesterday about two in the afternoon and as soone as I had shifted myselfe, I went into my wife's chamber, whom I founde in bedd by reason of a little cough and some inclination to a fever, but I beleeve she will finde herself very well in the morning when she awakes. I can now only give you an account of what I have seene a bedd, which in short is her face is not so exact as to be called a beauty, though her eyes are excellent goode, and not any thing in her face that in the least degree can shock one; on the contrary, she hath as much agreeableness in her looks alltogether as ever I saw and if I have any skill in phisionomy, which I thinke I have, she must be as goode a woman as ever was borne. Her conversation, as much as I can perceeve, is very good, for she has witt enough and a most agreeable voice. You would wonder to see how well acquainted we are already. In a word, I thinke myselfe very happy, for I am confident our two humours will agree very well together."

Catherine for her part saw the romantic hero of her dreams, and it did not in the least diminish her admiration that his face had so little regular beauty; he himself when confronted with his own portrait had been heard to exclaim: "Odd's fish, but I'm an ugly fellow!"

The next day the marriage took place without much pomp. In fact, part of it was actually surreptitious. Catherine was too good a Catholic not to desire the rites of her own Church, and Charles was too good-natured to deny such a trifle, which would cost him nothing. So in the presence of only a few Portuguese and the Duke of York, a priest gave them a Catholic blessing, despite Clarendon's remark that this could not be. A little later, with many more witnesses, and more elaborate ceremonies, the marriage was solemnized by the Church of which Charles was the head.

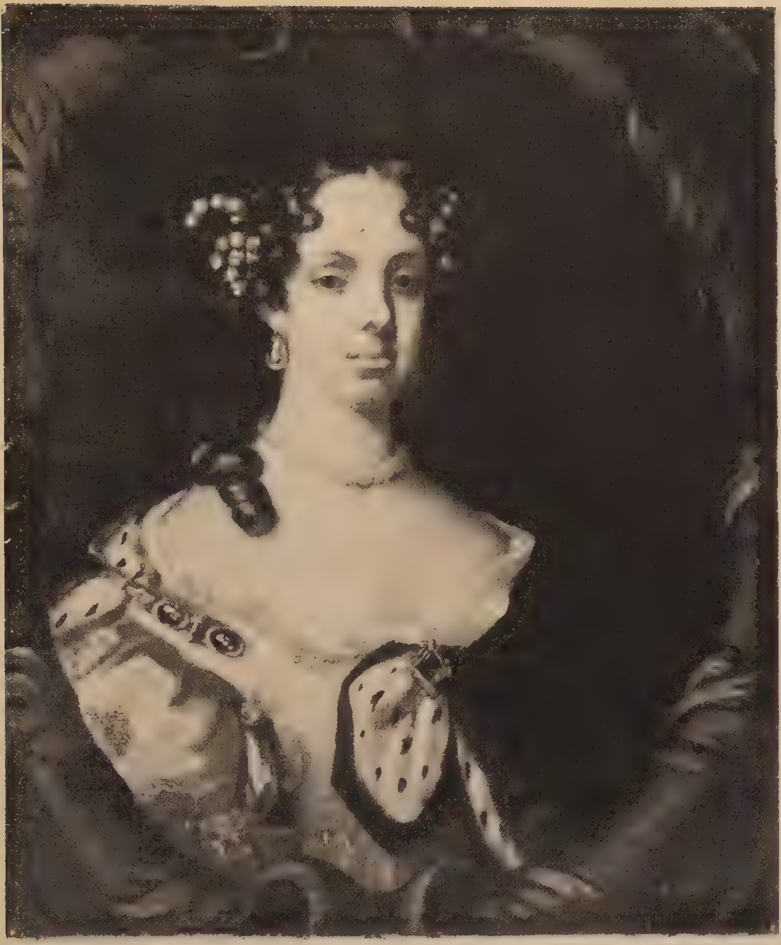
" My Lord of St. Albans," the bridegroom wrote to his sister, " will give you soe full a description of my wife as I shall not go about to doe it, only I must tell you I think myselfe very happy."

He added some reflections on the tragedy of Minette's own domestic relations as the wife of Louis' brother, the Duc d'Orleans, and expressed his intention to give Catherine a more pleasant wedding night than poor Henriette had enjoyed. Several days later he wrote to Clarendon:

" I cannot easily tell you how happy I think myselfe, and must be the worst man living (which I hope I am not) if I be not a good husband."

Within a few weeks he had shocked even his careless court by his idea of what it meant to be a good husband. Installed with Catherine at the handsomest of his palaces, Hampton Court, with its stately apartments and lovely gardens, he was engaged in a determined fight to force his mistress into his wife's household. He had drawn up a list of ladies of the bedchamber, which Catherine accepted with one reservation, for she did not know any English women and her husband's choice was enough for her. But she had heard of Lady Castlemaine, had even been warned against tolerating her at court, and she drew her pen through Barbara's name. Charles did not immediately protest, and for a few weeks life was very pleasant. There were tennis and strolling and boating in the warm June days and dancing, play and flirtation at night.

The King was teaching his wife English, and the first



Catherine of Braganza

"That person cannot be unhandsome."

words she learned were " you lie," which Mr. Pepys heard her address to her husband when he said that she was pregnant. His Majesty was so delighted with her proficiency that he had her repeat after him as her next lesson, " Confess and be hanged." Nevertheless, it was observed that the Queen spent rather too much time at her devotions and did not sufficiently enter into the gayety of the place. For the first fault she was scorned by the Puritanical; for the second she was mocked by the court.

Charles was not speaking of Barbara at this time because she was not there. Not even her charms could overcome the facility with which his Majesty neglected the absent. She had remained in London to be delivered of Charles' son, Charles Fitzroy, later created Duke of Southampton, but as soon as she could travel, she came to claim her promised place at court. Charles hated to quarrel with her, for she had a violent temper, a biting tongue and a gift for the sort of scene that made the King most unhappy. Anyway, he thought, it would be well to impress his will upon his wife at the outset of their married life.

He began with a good-humoured insistence that Lady Castlemaine receive her appointment. Catherine was stubborn, even after Charles laid aside his good humour. The whole court split into factions, both of which enjoyed themselves immensely exchanging gossip about the progress of the royal quarrel. Barbara's friends, who were also his, reminded Charles that his grandfather, Henry of Navarre, had given his mistresses great positions at court. Older, more restrained men like Clarendon lectured him on the sin of introducing an " infamous " woman into his wife's pure society. Charles resented nothing but the word " infamous." A King's mistress, he told the outraged Chancellor, ranked in any society, no matter how respectable, above any other man's wife. He had set his will on Barbara's appointment, and he wrote to his old mentor:

" Whosoever I finde to be my Lady Castlemaine's enimy in this matter, I do promise upon my word to be his enimy as long as I live."

The Chancellor did not cease his objections, but he consented to persuade the Queen to violate the dictates of her own conscience and his. He spent many unhappy days alternately pointing out to Catherine how ill it became a wife to cross her husband and urging Charles not to force an insult upon his Queen. He failed to convince either of them, and Charles then tried to rush matters. He brought his mistress to court and in the midst of a sudden tremendous silence led her up to Catherine. The Queen, who still knew no English, did not catch the name when Barbara was presented and greeted the beauty cordially. But as soon as she realized who had kissed her hand, she fainted dramatically and had to be carried from the room.

Charles still persevered. He decided upon a slower campaign, and began it by sending his wife's Portuguese attendants back to Lisbon. Then he systematically ignored Catherine, spending more and more time in the handsome house which he maintained for Lady Castlemaine. The rest of the court took their cue as usual from the master, and the unfortunate Queen lived forlornly alone, shunned by everyone except a few necessary attendants and unable to converse much with them. At last she surrendered. She invited Lady Castlemaine to become a Lady of the Bedchamber, and even tried to please her husband by being ostentatiously friendly with the woman, something he had never even suggested.

Immediately the King became as charming as he had been before, and his selfish cruelty had justified itself in his eyes. For the rest of his life, Catherine was his adoring admirer and never again attempted or even desired to cross him in anything. In return he gave her his friendship, treated her with gentle courtesy, insisted that even the most privileged of his friends accord her the deference due her rank, and when it was remarked with amazement that he seemed quite fond of her in spite of her obvious lack of charm, he cried:

" Odd's fish, man! If I'm not good myself, do you think I can't respect those that are? "

Sixteen

ENTERING upon the third year of his reign, Charles found that his control of the country did not quite equal his authority in his family. He wanted to be absolute in both, although he was so ready to sacrifice show for reality that many men doubted the existence of this ambition. Royalists complained that he had relinquished his government to Clarendon; moralists mourned that he was dominated by Lady Castlemaine. Neither realized that he yielded to these two only where he agreed or was indifferent. He gave the Chancellor a free hand in details of administration because he himself was concentrating his attention on foreign policy. He permitted Barbara to queen it at court, wheedle him for money, intrigue for places, because these things seemed to him unimportant and it was easier to submit than quarrel.

He disproved the theory of Clarendon's sway by ignoring the Chancellor in a transaction which turned England forever from vain dreams of Continental conquest to more attainable ambitions of trade and empire. He sold to France his country's last bit of land on the eastern coast of the Channel, Dunkirk. The place was for all practical purposes quite worthless to Englishmen. It served only to irritate Frenchmen and gratify British pride of possession.

It was expensive to maintain and easily conquered whenever France should feel the conquest was worth a determined effort. Charles decided to anticipate such an event by selling the town. Clarendon protested throughout the rather protracted negotiations. Charles demanded half a million; Louis countered with an offer of less than £100,000. At last the deal was closed for £290,000, and Dunkirk was duly delivered to the French amid a chorus of complaint that the King of England was no patriot.

In other matters Charles was not so successful in forcing his will upon Clarendon and the country. As strongly as he was capable of feeling attachment to any other principle than the sanctity of monarchy, he was devoted to the theory that a man's beliefs were his own business. Indeed, his tolerance was the only religious sentiment in which he indulged. He was completely indifferent to all creeds and dogma, and he thought it monstrous that anyone should be persecuted for a matter of so little importance as the spiritual authority of episcopacy or the doctrine of transubstantiation. He proposed to do away with all the penal laws designed to force uniformity upon the people of England.

In his Declaration from Breda, he had promised toleration " for tender consciences," and it was one promise he meant to keep. When a conference on Church affairs was held to reconcile Presbyterianism, the dominant dissenting sect, to the Church of England, the King suggested that freedom be given to any form of worship which did not disturb the public peace. Neither Presbyterians nor Churchmen would hear of it. To his surprise, not a single member of that congress of clergymen supported him. A few weeks later he watched with helpless disapproval while Clarendon jockeyed the Presbyterians out of a strong position and put them in a class with all other dissenters. Then the business of restoring the Church to the high Anglican model of the Chancellor's desires proceeded merrily.

As further answer to the King's plea for tolerance, Parliament passed bills which bound all clergymen and municipal officials to take oaths to which no one but a member of the Church of England could in honour swear. Charles countered with an announcement that he would suspend the execution of these laws, but he was persuaded that he was not yet firmly enough settled on his throne for that. Still he tried to mitigate the bigotry of his people. He appealed to them for moderation, and asked Parliament to recognize his power of easing the severity of the laws so that dissenters might not be forced into rebellion or exile.

The Houses replied with a demand for the banishment of all Catholic priests. Shortly thereafter they passed a bill forbidding more than four persons to meet for religious services, other than those of the State Church, even in private homes. Unless he agreed to both measures, Charles was plainly told, there would be no extra appropriations to pay his debts. For over a year he had fought against the overwhelming sentiment of a nation bent on persecution. At last he shrugged his shoulders and gave way, resolving to await a more likely opportunity for inculcating a spirit of tolerance into Englishmen.

The restrictions and sufferings for conscience which fell upon the Protestant dissenters bothered him hardly at all, except as further proof of the insuperable folly of mankind. But persecution of Catholics touched him more nearly. Many of his friends were Catholics; men and women of that faith had saved his life after Worcester and treated him more kindly than others when he was in exile.

"For my part," he informed Clarendon during a Privy

Council debate of tolerance, " rebell for rebell, I had rather trust a papist rebell then a presbiterian one."

But the country was all against him. Popery was the great enemy, the menace, the beast, the tempter. Men thought it very suspicious that their King should seek to protect the hated sect. The rumours of his conversion increased, and in turn swelled the popular terror of anything approaching toleration. All Charles could win from his Parliament was a clause exempting from the rigours of the law those Catholics who had aided his escape in '51.

Despite his failure, he was well content with life just at the moment. His mother had come to see his wife and had brought with her little James Crofts, Lucy Barlow's son, a bright, engaging lad, not quite fourteen, who won his father's love and favour at once. While Clarendon grumbled that Englishmen in their purity of thought would never tolerate such Frenchified customs as the recognition of natural children by a King, Charles proceeded calmly to make a place at court for his son. The lad was duly acknowledged, created Duke of Orkney and of Monmouth and betrothed to the richest heiress in the three kingdoms, a little girl of his own age. The boy was given precedence of the entire peerage, dukes of the legitimate blood royal alone excepted, and was one of his father's closest companions. Monmouth proved an adept student of the graces in which Charles was a master. He learned polite acquirements so well that the French Ambassador, a most prejudiced critic of all things English, declared there were only two gentlemen in England who would shine at the French court, the King and the young Duke of Monmouth. Such of the young man's education as was not attended to by his father was handled by Lady Castlemaine, and men who had been captivated by his youthful charm mourned that such a promising lad should be initiated into all the vices of the age by a woman whose amours rivalled those of the King himself in number and publicity.

Charles did not worry about such a trifle. He was engrossed in the business of falling in love, and with a passion that bore no resemblance to his rather eager but careless complaisance up to that time. The men of his court had already observed, some with envy and others with horror, that although his Majesty was of an amorous disposition, he was never the aggressor in any intrigue with a woman. He accepted their advances gladly and appeared to be much swayed by his mistresses, but his affections were never engaged deeply; he never grudged his women other lovers; he never seemed to think of them when they were not present. But now, to the considerable surprise of his friends, he exhibited all the signs of conventional love. He pursued, he was jealous, he was abstracted, he brooded. It was quite astonishing.

The object of all this turmoil within the royal bosom was a beautiful young creature who had come over from France with Henrietta Maria. Frances Stuart was the daughter of a royalist physician who had attended his Queen into exile. She had repaid his services by rearing his daughter in her household, and the girl now came with a letter from the beloved Minette, who had known her since infancy and wrote to her brother:

" She is the prettiest girl in the world, and one of the best fitted of any I know to adorn a court."

Charles thought so too. Frances was tall, beautifully proportioned, with a classic profile, an exceptionally graceful carriage and an elfish play of expression that contrasted charmingly with her dignified perfection of feature. She was not quite sixteen, but, thanks to her training in France, a complete woman of the world. She had one quality, rare in her society, which her most ardent admirers were slow to understand and which many never did believe. She valued chastity as a virtue.

Charles was, as usual, leading the whole court when he fell in love with her. He immediately appointed her to his wife's bedchamber, and this time Catherine gave no sign of objecting. He planned elaborate balls for her, commanded plays to be acted for her, gave displays of music and fireworks on the river for her amusement, exhausted his wit and his charm to win her. And to the great surprise of all men, she repulsed him, but very kindly. She was a gay young thing, the centre of every mad bit of play at court, and it did not seem possible to her contemporaries that she could retain her virginity for no better reason than principle. They agreed with the inquisitive Pepys' verdict that she was " a cunning slut " and they credited her with deep designs.

A year had passed since the King's marriage, and the Queen had shown no symptoms of pregnancy, although Lady Castlemaine was carrying another of his Majesty's children. Statesmen and courtiers were talking of the advisability of divorcing barren wives, and many of them thought Frances was ambitious to replace her mistress. Charles' passion and reputation for seeking only to gratify his own desires, encouraged the belief, but there was another, equally shrewd school of thought which held that the girl would wield more influence as a mistress than as a Queen. At the head of this faction — for the court was split into rival camps and even in the lowest taverns wagers were laid on the outcome — was the King's old friend, the Duke of Buckingham. He had given over trying to win the beauty's favours for himself and had cultivated her friendship for the added influence it might give him. Buckingham was always an important figure, even when he was in disgrace, for he understood the King better than most and was besides the eccentric genius of whom his bitter enemy, John Dryden, wrote:

A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one but all mankind's epitome;
Stiff in opinions, always in the wrong,
Was everything by starts and nothing long;
But in the course of one revolving moon
Was chemist, fiddler, statesman and buffoon;
Then all for women, painting, rhyming, drinking
Besides ten thousand freaks that died in thinking.

At the moment the versatile Duke was turning his talents to pimping. He, his wife, his sister and Sir Henry Bennett, one of his Majesty's boon companions in exile and a useful official since the Restoration, formed a coalition which enjoyed some fleeting fame as the "Committee for the Getting of Mrs. Stuart for the King." They succeeded no better than Charles did unaided, but they were a godsend to the gossips. One day they prepared a magnificent entertainment which, they hoped, would be so splendid that his Majesty would have no difficulty in seducing the dazzled and perhaps slightly intoxicated Frances. But they over-reached themselves. Their elaborate preparations were so much talked of, although their real purpose remained a secret, that Catherine innocently decided she could not afford to miss it. The party was barely under way when, to the horror of the hosts, her Majesty was announced. Everyone except Charles was in a state of wild alarm. He was quite unable to control his amusement and welcomed his wife with a burst of laughter which he did not condescend to explain to her. Before the " Committee for the Getting of Mrs. Stuart for the King " had recovered from their chagrin, he had sent a messenger to Whitehall to summon the Maids of Honour, and the great seduction scene was transformed into a dance. Soon thereafter the Committee was disbanded.

The King, however, was not so easily discouraged, and in the autumn of 1663, there was a general report that both he and Frances would achieve their supposed ambitions. The Queen was so ill that the physicians despaired of her life, and for several days the gossips could talk of nothing but his Majesty's next wife.

Charles took no part in such conversations, and no one dared begin them in his presence. His heart was touched, mildly but genuinely, by the sight of the wife whom he had not after all treated too well tossing in delirium and crying out how much she loved him. That love and her one great sorrow, her inability to bear him a child, were preying upon her mind. In her illness she developed the hallucination that she had really borne three children, and Charles sat miserably at her bedside by the hour while she raved, asking anxiously how they did and whether they resembled their father. She seemed comforted when he assured her that they were fine youngsters and did them credit. Tender emotions which the King had long ago taught himself to steel against the perfidy and baseness of mankind were tapped by her delirious mutterings, and tears wetted his harsh face.

He could not remain with Catherine constantly, and when he did leave her it was to spend a gay evening with Lady Castlemaine while his courtiers wondered at what they took to be a remarkable exhibition of hypocrisy. They misjudged their master. He was as sincere in his grief as in his fun, and in Barbara's company he was able to forget his dying wife, just as he forgot his mistress when he was in the sickroom. After a few days, however, he could spend all his time with Barbara, for the Queen unexpectedly took a turn for the better and was soon out of danger. The royal tears had made such an impression that a courtly poet, celebrating her recovery, exclaimed

> . . . when no healing art prevailed,
> When cordials and elixirs failed,
> On your pale cheek he dropped the shower,
> Revived you like a dying flower.

Meanwhile, despite his infatuation for Frances Stuart, Charles had not been neglecting the other pleasures of life. He satisfied his paternal affections by seeing Monmouth married soon after his fourteenth birthday to the heiress, Anne Scott, whose name he took. It was a gay affair for everyone except the slightly bewildered principals and it quite lived up to the expectations the King had formed when he wrote to his sister:

" You must not by this post expect a long letter from me, this being Jameses marriage day, and I am goeing to sup with them, when we intend to dance and see them a bed together, but the ceremony shall stop there for they are too young to pass the whole night thus."

Nor had his admiration of " La Belle Stuart's " charms blinded him to those of other girls, for he wrote with pleasure that " a great many yong wemen who are very handsome " were to be seen at court just now. He followed the fortunes of them all with great interest, and confided this result of his observations to Minette:

" I finde the passion Love is very much out of fasion in this country, and that a handsome face without money has but few galants upon the score of marriage."

Similar musings upon this tender subject inspired the only recorded instance of his bursting into song of his own writing. Set to a melody which accorded well with his " plump bass " were his verses

I pass all my hours in a shady old grove,
But I live not the day when I see not my love;
I survey every walk now my Phyllis is gone,
And sigh when I think we were there all alone.
Oh, then 'tis I think there's no Hell
Like loving too well.

But each shade and each conscious bower when I find
Where I once have been happy and she has been kind;
When I see the print left of her shape on the green,
And imagine the pleasure may yet come again;
Oh, then 'tis I think that no joys are above
The pleasures of love.

While alone to myself I repeat all her charms,
She I loved may be locked in another man's arms,
She may laugh at my cares, and so false she may be,
To say all the kind things she before said to me!
Oh then 'tis, oh then, that I think there's no Hell
Like loving too well.

But when I consider the truth of her heart,
Such an innocent passion, so kind without art,
I fear I have wronged her, and hope she may be
So full of true love to be jealous of me.
Oh then 'tis I think that no joys are above
The pleasures of love.

But the royal poet was not by any means confining himself to the pleasures of love. He was in regular attendance at the theatre, and a new school of clever playwrights was contending for royal favour, which was never withheld from a dramatist who could turn out amusing work. He took early notice of young Dryden, as much for the genuine merit of the man's poetry as for the lines which the fellow was astutely sycophantic enough to address to Lady Castlemaine

Your power you never used but for defence,
To guide your own or others' innocence;
Your foes are such as they, not you, have made,
And virtue may repel though not invade.
Such courage did the ancient heroes show,
Who when they might prevent, would wait the blow;
With such assurance as they meant to say,
We will o'ercome, but scorn the safest way.

The afternoons devoted to the stage and the evenings consecrated to gallantry left plenty of time for the King's two other favourite pleasures — sport and study, which usually divided his mornings. He was one of the best tennis players in England and delighted to display his prowess. He was fond of the water and spent hours on the Thames sailing or swimming or fishing. His indolence was never physical. He was as conscientious in keeping fit as any pugilist, and all his life he retained the robust health of a professional athlete.

Charles wasted remarkably little time in sleep. For weeks on end he would retire at midnight or later after an evening of dancing and dallying and " that foolish, idle, impertinent thing called business," only to be up and taking

" my usual physicke at Tennis " in the early summer dawn. He was equally devoted to the chase, and was almost as reckless a huntsman as his brother, whose courage in the field was famous. The King was an even more tireless rider than James. He often cantered fourteen miles to dine with a friend, returning the same way at night. It was nothing remarkable if he rode sixty miles in addition to the day's work, and the court letters frequently contained such items as:

" The King tired all their horses and comes home with not above two or three able to keep pace with him."

He put his horsemanship to good purpose at Newmarket, where he and his friends rode their own entries and introduced Eastern blood into the racing strains of England. Enormous sums changed hands on match races, which were sometimes run over a course of six miles, although Charles himself never bet more than a gold piece or two. All the world of fashion came down for the fun, all the diversions of London were added to the racing, and one courtier, writing of the gayety to a friend, concluded:

" As thou prizes earthly Paradise, bringe a mayde of honour behind thee next week."

Any turf triumphs Charles won were earned, for his rivals speedily discovered that he was a good-humoured loser, just as generous with favours after defeat as after victory, and only once in years of striving did he carry off the chief prize at Newmarket, the " Twelve-stone Plate." He was in his forties then, riding home ahead of a field that included his eldest son. However, he won many lesser races, and his stable was one of the best in England.

Wherever he went he was attended by dogs, usually those untidy-looking little spaniels who came to be called by his name. To these animals he accorded liberties which no human might take. They tumbled and scampered and snuffled all over the royal apartments; his favourite bitches littered in his bedroom; a dozen or more always slept there; at least one attended him on his walks. They were such a recognized part of the royal scene that they entered into such satirical verses of the day as

> His very dog at Council board
> Sits grave and wise as any Lord.

Charles was as much interested in science as he had been in the idleness of exile. Hardly a day passed without some time spent in his laboratory where he dabbled happily in chemicals and corpses, mixing noxious compounds and dissecting bodies to see how they were made, a proceeding which gave a certain amount of scandal to the pious. He had already given his charter, a gift and his moral support to a group of serious, inquisitive thinkers who from this time were known as the Royal Society. He permitted them the use of his instruments, set them questions to investigate and perused reports of their experiments which were laying the foundation of modern science.

He was equally interested in a less edifying experiment which King Louis was conducting in Paris. The young monarch, who was just beginning to think of himself as the Sun King, had fallen in love with one of Minette's Maids of Honour, Louise de la Valliere. That was quite in order, although there was some criticism of his taste, but he had complicated matters by insisting that his sister-in-law keep the girl for him. Henriette did not object until she heard the rumour that she herself was the attraction which drew the royal visits. The undeserved honour embarrassed her, as she had enough trouble with her husband already, but Louis refused to give his mistress public recognition. He pleaded that his wife would make difficulties. Henriette appealed to her brother for support. She thought he ought to remonstrate with Louis. He admitted that she had justice on her side, but, recalling his own troubles in a somewhat similar case, he added:

" If I had been in his place, I should have done the same."

He did not have to worry about getting into such a situation again, however. He was so well satisfied with life, happy in one beautiful mistress and the hope of another, happy in his children, happy in his peaceful rule, happy in his laziness, his amusements and his friends that he managed even to be happy in his married life. His letters were studded with requests for little trinkets to give Catherine, and with such remarks as " My wife sends for me iust now to dance" or " I have ben all this afternoon playing the good husband, haveing been abroade with my wife, and I am very sleepy."

Seventeen

ONE other pleasure Charles enjoyed in the odd moments that could be spared from lighter amusements. He entered with zest into the manipulation of foreign policy, and in the conduct of his affairs with the powers of Europe he found a happy exercise for his wits. The leisurely unravellings of diplomacy were admirably suited to his temperament. The real business of the higher politics was conducted with no formal routine to mar the fun. Problems of the gravest importance were as a matter of course discussed with an ambassador during a stroll or in a few moments stolen from court gayety. Furthermore there was seldom any need for haste, as there always seemed to be in domestic affairs. Yet he could feel that he was not playing merely for the fun of it, for the future of the kingdom and the monarchy was involved in every decision he took.

In his chosen field the King ruled without direction and with very little help. He was more familiar with European conditions, he understood the ambitions of other nations better than anyone connected with his government. The most important questions were often settled by his Majesty in secret without reference to a single adviser. From the very first days of the Restoration he was absolute in his control of foreign relations. And from the very first days he had fixed upon a policy from which he never departed fundamentally. It had two cardinal principles — a close alliance with France, which would keep him at peace with his most powerful neighbour, and a maritime, commercial, colonial supremacy over the Dutch.

The first of these objects was easy to achieve. Through Minette, for whose intelligence Louis had come to have the utmost respect, he carried on friendly negotiations that were seldom interrupted. The two Kings were cordial enough personally, in the distant manner of cousins who are not too well acquainted, and both desired the alliance. There were only a few obstacles, the least of which in Charles' view was that his people hated the idea of such a concord. Trifles of a regal nature were more important, for Charles could be quite as great a stickler for the dignity due his crown as any Bourbon.

Differences of opinion about precedence more than once ruffled the harmonious relations between England and France. One French Ambassador had had to leave because he was worsted in a bloody battle with the Spanish envoy over the question of whose coach went first. Louis' feelings were hurt because, as he wrote indignantly, " the King my brother has taken part in this without necessity and in a rather unobliging manner (Charles objected to such bloody rioting by foreigners in his capital) as he seems to have been bent upon having a complete equality established between me and my brother, the Catholic King."

A little later it was Charles' turn to air a grievance. For several months his correspondence with his sister was devoted to smoothing out difficulties arising from Louis' insistence that a French Prince of the Blood was entitled to walk before the English Ambassador. Charles resented this as derogation of his own royal rank, not to be borne since his Ambassador was, diplomatically speaking, himself and he could never consent to grant precedence to anyone. He took a very lofty tone, admirably suited to dealing with Louis, and wrote proudly:

"There is nobody desires more to have a strict frindship with the K. of France than I do, but I will never buy it upon dishonorable termes, and I thanke God my condition is not so ill but that I can stand upon my owne leggs."

Charles' gift for using the right language to the right person was always best displayed in defending his dignity. He talked of right, divine and otherwise, to Louis because he knew that was the most effective manner of address with his cousin, but he had other arguments to use on other occasions. When William Penn, whose Quaker views would not permit him to show signs of homage to mortal man, entered the royal presence with his hat on, Charles gave no sign of resenting the discourtesy, but removed his own. It was a cold day, and the whole court stood bareheaded while Penn discoursed with his master.

"Friend Charles," the Quaker asked at length, "why dost thou not keep on thy hat?"

"It is the custom of this place," his Majesty replied suavely, "for only one person to remain covered."

Of other men's dignity, however, he was not so jealous. He lumped all non-royal persons together, and not a little of his popularity was due to this fact. He was much too confident of his own Heaven-bestowed superiority to make any distinctions of rank among those beneath him. If he could carouse with a duke, he could carouse with a pot boy and in neither case should the companion of his fun assume that it made them equal to him. Whatever might happen in private, both duke and pot boy — and King Louis too — must show proper respect for his royalty, as distinct from his person, before the world. It was an attitude with which Louis was much in sympathy, and their quarrels never waxed acrimonious.

But the Dutch were much more troublesome to deal with than the French. They were, Charles realized, the great obstacle to English prosperity since they alone stood between England and mastery of international commerce. Furtheremore Charles disliked them as a nation, for they were republicans, they were sober, serious people who regarded with disapproval the things he liked. Nor could he forget that during his exile they showed so little respect for royalty as to forbid him to enter their country.

However, they were not to be despised, and Charles never made that mistake. Old Oliver, with all his might and glory, had only been able to defeat them in battle; he had not been able to wrest any of their trade from them. Indeed, during the Protectorate, Dutch merchants had increased their commerce considerably at the expense of their English rivals, and though they had yielded to Cromwell in politics they had fattened on the distractions of England's wars.

They were bankers for the world; they had held almost a monopoly of the carrying trade until Cromwell passed a Navigation Act decreeing that English goods must travel in English bottoms. Charles revived this law, but the Dutch kept the commerce of the rest of Europe. In the Orient their chain of trading posts gave them the whip hand over their rivals, for they alone had systematically followed up the maritime discoveries of the last century with an eye to business. They were the great power in Africa, and their ships skimmed the cream of the South American trade. Almost everywhere they were in greater numbers and more strategically placed than the English.

Charles' marriage, which gave his merchants a foothold in India, had done much to remedy this, but he had a mind to do more.

His method of dealing with the situation was more practical than war, although it was bound to lead eventually to hostilities. He proposed to compete more energetically and, if possible, more unscrupulously for the trading privileges of barbarous and savage peoples whom Europe was just learning to exploit most ruthlessly. But of course that did not matter, for they were not Christians.

He organized an expedition to the African coast, which the Dutch regarded as their own preserve, and when his ships were attacked both countries broke into a raging fury of patriotism and greed. The English, who had been given a taste of gold in the shape of coins which soon came to be called guineas because they were minted from metal brought by the Guinea Company, which Charles had chartered, were vociferous in demanding that the insolent Hollanders be punished as Oliver would have punished them. They were furious that the inhabitants of this patch of land reclaimed from the ocean should dare defy Englishmen and sneered that

> This indigested vomit of the sea
> Fell to the Dutch by just propriety.

The storm quickly blew up to such proportions that Charles, who would gladly have avoided the expense and trouble of armed conflict if he could have had his way without it, for he had no ambitions for martial glory, wrote sadly:

"I find myself almost the only man in my kingdom who doth not desire war."

◆

He had no doubts that it would come, and his best diplomatic efforts were being devoted to detaching Louis from his alliance with the Dutch. The King of France had passed his word to protect the Netherlands from aggression, and Charles was trying to convince him, in the manner of belligerents from time immemorial, that England was not really starting anything. During the summer of 1664 he laboured to this end, and soon became convinced that his cousin's support of the Dutch would be at most inconsiderable.

Then, quite some time before a declaration of war was forthcoming, the Duke of York fitted out a little expedition of his own and in October Charles wrote jubilantly — and with contemptuous disregard of mere historical facts — to Minette:

" You will have heard of our takeing of New Amsterdame, which lies just by New England. 'Tis a place of great importance to trade, and a very good towne. It did belong to England heeretofore, but the Duch by degrees drove our people out of it, and built a very good towne, but we have gott the better of it and 'tis now called New Yorke. He that took it and is now there is Nicols, my brother's servant, who you know very well."

This little incident, by which England acquired another province in North America, was only one of a long series of pre-war fights. It had been one of the least sanguinary, for the Dutch in New Amsterdam were not prepared for resistance and prudently refused to permit their fiery governor, Peter Stuyvesant, to attempt battle. But elsewhere the republic was not so weak. All over the world English and Dutch merchantmen were disputing with gun and cutlass for the privilege of doing business. Prizes were taken on both sides, native rulers were encouraged to rise against their exploiters, fierce engagements were fought in out of the way corners of the world.

The sturdy Hollanders were quite as angry as the English. They too felt that their just rights were being assailed without a shadow of justice. Their presses were quite as insulting as those of London. Feeling ran so high that a Dutchman of Bordeaux in the course of an argument on the merits of the quarrel, declared that King Charles was no better than a pirate. Such flagrant lese majesty was not to be tolerated in monarchical France, and the English Ambassador, Lord Hollis, demanded dire punishment of the criminal. Louis agreed that the heinous offence merited harsh measures, and told Minette that he would mete out whatever penalty his cousin thought suitable. But even in the heat of national passions, Charles stood too highly and sanely upon his dignity to compromise it by over-emphasis. He always considered it unbecoming to regal superiority to render it ridiculous by descending into a struggle with the vulgar over petty formalities.

" I am sorry," he wrote in reply to Minette's letter containing Louis' offer, " that my L^{d} Hollis has asked iustice upon a point of honour that I should never have thought of; you know the old saying in England, the more a T is stirr'd the more it stinkes, and I do not care a T for anything a Duch man sayes of me, and so I thinke you have enough upon this dirty subject which nothing but a stinking Duch man could have been the cause of, but pray thanke the King, my brother, and desire him not to take any kinde of notice of it, for such idle discourses are not worth his anger or myne."

Minette, for one, thought he was unduly forbearing. She was a rabid partisan of her brother, and used against the Dutch all her considerable influence with Louis, while writing to Charles:

" I cannot bear to think that this little handful of miserable creatures should dare to defy you."

But they did dare, and Charles pushed on his preparations for war with a vigour which surprised such critical advisers as Clarendon. His interest in and knowledge of navigation fitted him to direct what was certain to be entirely a naval conflict, and he spent a great deal of his time in the shipyards approving plans for and watching the construction of the vessels that, when summer fighting weather came, were to teach the impudent burghers of Holland a lesson. The King's rather too robust sense of humour in these days tried sorely those of his court who were poor sailors. He insisted on taking them on trial cruises in rough weather. The French Ambassador, Comte de Cominges, was one of his favourite victims for he had caused Charles much annoyance by his punctilio, his bickerings over precedence, his dilatory diplomacy which had led the King to declare he was " good for nothing but to give malicious and wrong intelligence." Charles was glad to take revenge by making the poor man seasick.

The unfortunate Ambassador got respite from one such trip when the court had to remain in London for the accouchement of the Duchess of York. Charles shared the general disappointment when the child proved to be a daughter, christened Anne after her mother, instead of the hoped-for son. But he was more interested in and concerned about Minette, who was expecting another child.

" I hope," he wrote, " you will have better lucke with it then the Duchesse heere had, who was brought to bed, Monday last, of a girle. One part I shall wish you to have, which is that you may have as easy a labour, for shee dispatched her businesse in little more than an houer. I am afraide your shape is not so advantageously made for that convenience as hers is, however a boy will recompense two grunts more, and so good night for feare I fall into naturale philosophy before I thinke of it."

There was really little danger of such a fall. His nearest approach to philosophy was an occasional speech to Parliament, when he would indulge in some reflections of a metaphysical nature on the justice of his cause in the approaching conflict. He had been pained to see that the enthusiastic loyalty of his House of Commons had cooled a little of recent months. They did not respond so immediately and cheerfully to his request for funds to pay for the war. They were inclined to pinch pennies and talk about extravagance, which was distinctly impertinent of them since the spending of the money they voted was quite outside their province and their constituents could not hold them responsible. However, they managed to make themselves so troublesome that the ingenious Pepys, now attached to the navy office where he was to set a tradition of loyalty and usefulness for generations of permanent officials, cooked up for their delectation some quite remarkable figures which grossly exaggerated the sums already spent on the fleet.

"But God knows," he confessed to his diary, "this is only a scare to the Parliament to make them give the more money."

The fiction served its purpose, and the Commons promptly levied taxes which, they vaguely guessed, would bring in enough money to finance a war. Charles, in one of his usual simple speeches, which were regarded by his contemporaries as rather inferior oratory because they contained none of the elaborately exaggerated metaphors which were then considered eloquence, prorogued Parliament with his thanks.

Within a short time of the prorogation he had done everything he could to insure victory. The fleet was the strongest that had ever sailed under the English flag. It was supposed to be well equipped, even after allowances were made for the usual peculations by commissariat officials. It was manned by the most adventurous, gallant band of cavaliers and gentlemen to be found in Europe, not even excepting the splendid court of France. That these brave spirits were quite ignorant of ships and tactics was beside the point. No one doubted that they were a match for any number of low-born Dutch dogs, and anyway a good many of Cromwell's old sea captains were on hand to furnish professional advice. The whole fleet was commanded by James, Duke of York, whose elevated rank was calculated to inspire his men and whose generalship, learned from Turenne, was highly admired even among those who had little regard for his other qualities. A good general was then thought to be admirably qualified to serve as an admiral, but James, strong as his brother was weak in industry and sense of duty, had added to his fitness for the post by learning all he could of seamanship, of which he was as fond as Charles.

Having seen this splendid array started off to battle, the King promptly slipped back into his old life. He earned the disapproval of all fiery patriots by declining to worry about the result of the fighting. They muttered that his Majesty was being led astray by evil, frivolous counsellors — the usual euphemism for a more direct criticism — and they even hinted that he had been too long in exile to appreciate, let alone to share, that high moral standard of Englishmen, which apparently dictated gloominess until there was news. Confronted with such opinions, Charles would shrug his shoulders and the lines of his sullen countenance would deepen into an expression of acute boredom. The war was out of his hands now and, so far as he gave any indication, out of his mind too.

As the English fleet sailed away to wrest commercial supremacy from their enemies, the King was engrossed in staging elaborate entertainments, in his loves, his laboratory and his sports, in the gossip of the court and in an entertaining musical novelty just introduced into England from Italy, the guitar. While gallants and warriors were seeking glory amid the fogs of the Channel, Whitehall throbbed with the strains of southern love songs. His Majesty had expressed his admiration for the new instrument so unequivocally that every lady of the court immediately installed one beside the rouge and patches on her toilet table. It was war.

Eighteen

WHILE London waited impatiently for news of a battle, an enemy far more deadly than the Dutch crept into the city. The spring of 1665 was hot and dry, leading to a great deal of conversation about the weather and how much it had altered since the good old days before the civil wars. Such talk served well enough among the comfortable classes, but the poorer folk had something more serious to discuss. A bubonic plague had made its appearance in their over-crowded, noisy, evil-smelling slums. It was a horror which frequently stalked into the vermin-infested towns, taking off hundreds, even thousands at a time, and prudent men fled from it with a fear they would have been ashamed to display before any other foe.

This epidemic, starting so unobtrusively in the homes of the very poorest, most miserable inhabitants, was more virulent than anything that had been seen in the Occident since the "Black Death" had depopulated medieval Europe. The present outbreak, however, was still so deceptively mild that in May those timid souls who were first to escape from the coming terror were merrily ridiculed as cowards by the carelessly, ignorantly optimistic populace. The prospect of a naval battle was discussed with a great deal more detail than the sickness, which even that inveterate newsmonger, Pepys, had barely mentioned as yet. However, the wits were observing with their usual caustic comments that a remarkably high proportion of physicians and clergymen were in the first rush to flee the city.

At Whitehall no one paid any heed to the plague. The court was much more apt to concern itself with the rapacity, impudence and influence of Lady Castlemaine or the chances that Frances Stuart would succomb to royal blandishments or the Queen's hope of a child. But in June even these juicy bits of gossip were lost in a mad celebration. Duke James had at last met the Dutch and defeated them. The loss of life and ships among the enemy had been tremendous, and was duly exaggerated, while the damage to the English was of course minimized. Indeed the Dutch had suffered heavily, the remnants of their fleet barely escaping back to safe harbours, while England had suffered mostly in battered ships. The victory had only failed of being complete because, while James slept, one of his gentlemen, who had seen quite all the fighting he had stomach for, ordered sail taken in during the night and by morning the fugitives were too far ahead to be overtaken. This slight blemish in a glorious success was easily overlooked for the moment, and London went mad with patriotic delight. The usual crowds paraded the streets, the usual noise was made, the usual thanksgiving sermons were delivered and his Majesty gave his usual dance after the usual display of fireworks and music on the river.

But while the heroes of the fight were returning home to claim the gratitude of the nation, the plague struck root deep into the heart of London, and the warriors lost their glorious reward. At the end of the month the mortality bills were listing the deaths from plague by the hundreds every week and mounting fast. Nearly everyone who could get away from the city was packing up hastily. The few inadequate roads that led from London were choked with coaches, waggons, carts, pack-horses, horsemen. Many families stumbled along on foot trundling their most prized possessions as though they were fleeing from a theatre of war. Still Charles stayed on at Whitehall while his courtiers and the news writers grumbled that he was needlessly risking the most precious life in the Kingdom by remaining so close to the pestilential city. At last, in July, he reluctantly moved to Hampton Court.

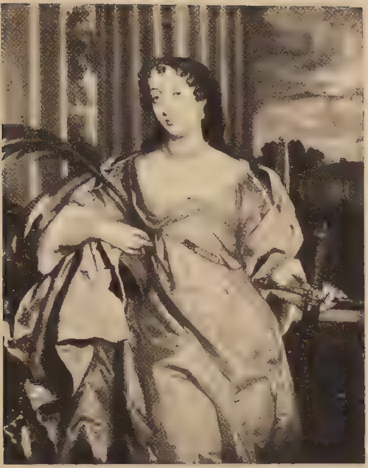
He hated to leave his favourite palace. Whitehall contained all the works of art he admired most, had more facilities for amusement and was more conveniently laid out than any other place he could find. Nowhere else could his enormous retinue be accommodated so comfortably as in the series of rambling buildings that constituted Whitehall. Furthermore the place had been adapted with great skill to his Majesty's especial requirements. His own apartments pleased him more than any other lodgings and were arranged so that he could communicate with the least possible trouble with any other part of the palace. On one side they opened into the suite set aside for the Queen; on the other they led to the quarters of the Maids of Honour.

A narrow, exceedingly private flight of stairs circled down from a tiny anteroom adjoining his bedchamber into the lodgings occupied by Will Chiffinch, "Keeper of the Backstairs," a discreet and talented fellow who served his master well as confidential messenger, spy and pimp. Chiffinch's apartments opened onto the Thames, and a few small boats were always waiting at the private landing at the foot of the backstairs. It was down this flight that his Majesty went in pursuit of women and adventure. It was up them that ambassadors, spies and favourite ministers came to see the King in such privacy as his bedchamber afforded. This was by no means complete, for the room was always full of courtiers until Charles retired, and even then etiquette demanded that a gentleman of the bedchamber sleep there. The King, harassed by incessant publicity, needed a private exit to his amours and a private entrance for his politics.

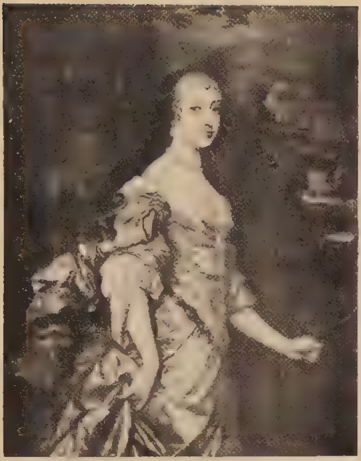
Such conveniences were not to be found everywhere about the country. Hampton Court was best, but a few weeks there were all that could be permitted. The plague was raging so uncontrollably at the end of that time that it counted its victims by the hundreds every day instead of every week. Hampton Court was much too close to London for safety, so the royal train moved cumbersomely on across the country seeking successfully for safety but in vain for comfort and amusement.

Charles fixed on Salisbury for his headquarters, but the place was so small that nearly every member of his retinue felt the discomforts of over-crowding. An order for all " superfluous persons " to quit the town gave little relief. Then, to add to the inconveniences of makeshift lodgings, a case of plague was discovered among the domestic servants. The epidemic was seeping slowly through the entire country, though nowhere did it reach London proportions. However, Charles was afraid people would begin to think the plague followed him, and he tried to keep the illness of his servant secret. This was impossible, but the measures he ordered to prevent contagion served just as well, for no more cases developed.

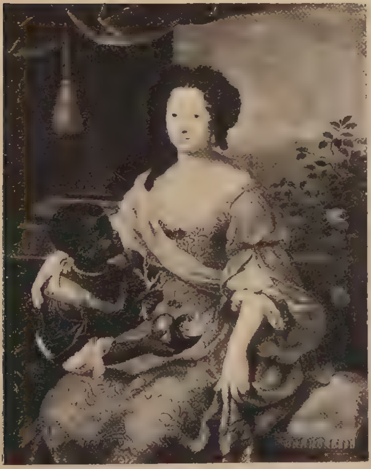
For eight weeks he remained in the vicinity of Salisbury suffering acutely from boredom. In sheer desperation he visited a number of dull towns in the neighbourhood. His



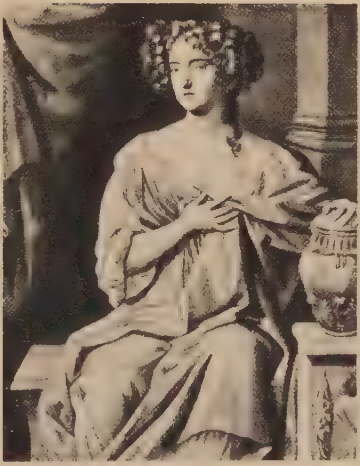
Barbara Palmer
Duchess of Cleveland



Frances Stuart
Duchess of Richmond



Louise de Querouaille
Duchess of Portsmouth



Hortense Mancini
Duchess of Mazarin

own quarantine measures kept him from indulging his usual pleasures, and it annoyed him that everyone worried so ceaselessly, fretfully and uselessly about his safety.

Saving its concern for the royal person, his government took almost no notice of the plague. Monk had been left to deal with London as he saw fit and no one dreamed of interfering with his thankless, hopeless task. The Privy Council, which followed the King, discussed the epidemic just three times in a year's meetings, and did no more than talk on these occasions. All three conversations, furthermore, were directed solely to making sure that the sickness did not come near them. They were not unique in this, however, for no community would permit any visitors from the plague-ridden city.

Londoners were now dying at the rate of more than a thousand a day. All night carts rumbled ominously through the streets to the accompaniment of the doleful cry, " Bring out your dead! " Long rows of houses bore, every one, the cross which showed that the plague was within. Some men still had the courage to go about their business, but many more cowered at home waiting for death. Others, crazed by the all-pervading horror, rioted madly through the town in a cheerless, frenzied quest for pleasure before they too should be stricken. In many quarters of the city these wild bands and the equally wild fellows who alone were willing to accept the grisly task of collecting the victims were the only figures to be seen about the streets. The churches had long since given up trying to toll their bells for the dead, and the living could not bury the corpses fast enough. Dead men lay in the gutters where they had fallen. Whole families were wiped out, and their bodies left to rot in their homes. So many were afflicted that it was impossible to force all of them to keep to their houses, as had been ordered. Little groups of mourners, carrying their dead, were as common as hucksters in normal times, but the usual funeral procession would consist of great putrefying piles of bodies, attended only by ribald labourers who had to be roaring drunk before they could perform their nauseous work of casting the horrible carrion into pits.

Weird and pitiful expedients were resorted to in the vain hope of curing or preventing the spread of infection. Some put their faith in mysterious charms, tokens and incantations. Others relied upon prayer. Periodically through the year of terror, the authorities decreed days of fasting and supplication for divine mercy. At one time there was a general belief that the plague might be burned out of the air, and all through one sweltering summer day bonfires blazed spectacularly but unavailingly before nearly every house in London.

One school of the scientifically minded held that alcohol was a preservative against the sickness, and devotees of this theory remained for months in a state of gloomy, fearsome intoxication. Another set swore by the antiseptic virtue of tobacco fumes, and Eton beheld the strange spectacle of lads being flogged unmercifully because they refused to smoke. There was even a rumour that venereal diseases conferred upon their victims immunity from the more dreaded ailment. While this superstition survived, the foulest bawdy houses in the nastiest sections of the city were eagerly patronized by thousands sedulously courting syphilis in the hope that it might save them from a worse fate.

The plague was at its murderous height when Charles moved to Oxford to meet the Houses of Parliament, summoned to the university city to escape the infection of the capital. War and pestilence were the chief problems he set them to solve. About the latter they did nothing. A bill was introduced into the House of Commons providing for the erection of pest houses, the searching of homes for the afflicted and the stringent segregation of all patients. But the Lords raised objections. They insisted that their homes must be exempted from search or quarantine out of respect for their Order. They also passed an amendment that no pest house could be built near the dwelling of any peer. In the quarrel over the privileges of the nobility, the whole bill was forgotten.

The only other Parliamentary result of the plague was another blow at the King's hope of eventual religious toleration. Members saw a grave threat to the Church in the fact that many London clergymen had abandoned their flocks. That in itself was quite in order, but their empty pulpits had been occupied by dissenting ministers who were capitalizing the disaster. Eloquent Presbyterians and Baptists were attracting huge congregations. Something must be done. In the safety of Oxford, Parliament did it. An act was passed for the more rigorous suppression of conventicles, as the heretical meetings were called. It was re-inforced with the Five Mile Act, forbidding non-conformist ministers to come within five miles of any town. Threats to withhold war supplies forced Charles to sign.

When the Houses did then come to consider the war, they were almost as ineffectual as in dealing with the epidemic, for they were given to recrimination rather than action, after the manner of Parliaments everywhere. The great June victory had proved more damaging to the winners than to the losers. The Duke's fleet had put back into port to be refitted, repaired and revictualled, but found no money in the Exchequer for such expenses, nor even for more pressing needs. Convalescent sailors and their comrades who had been sent ashore from disabled ships to shift for themselves were starving in hundreds for want of their pay. The poor wretches, clamouring for relief around the doors of the Navy Office yet easily pacified by a few kind words, wrung the heart of Mr. Pepys, but nothing could be done. The government was already borrowing on taxes that would not be collected for two years, and paying ten per cent interest besides. Meanwhile the Dutch, drawing upon their resources as the wealthiest nation in the world, had no difficulty in fitting out another fleet which now ranged the Channel, striking terror into coast towns and menacing trade.

The obvious need of the moment was money, not talk, and Charles urged the Commons to act upon that principle. He pointed out to them that the taxes levied earlier in the year were not yet coming in and had been mortgaged to the last penny. But the House was in no hurry. When at last it did vote £1,250,000, the bill was accompanied by an insult without precedent in English history. The presuming legislators had dared to tack onto the appropriation a clause stipulating that this money could be used for no other purposes but the war. It was the first time a Parliament had offered to dictate to a King how he should spend his revenues. Clarendon was furious, crying out that such a bill was " not fit for a monarchy." Charles was equally angry, but he did not give vent to his feelings. He accepted the money but remembered the insult. He had expected to use these funds for the war anyway.

With obvious relief he dismissed Parliament and settled down to enjoy a winter in Oxford. The court was more comfortable here than it could have been anywhere outside London, and once again both plague and war were forgotten in the gayety of existence. Nothing was permitted to mar Christmas festivities and Christ Church, where the King was domiciled, was a far merrier place than it had ever been when only the students and fellows were in residence. Nearby was Lady Castlemaine, as usual, rapidly recovering from giving birth to her third son by his Majesty.

Christmas was the gayest Oxford had seen in many years, and none the less so because the court could now plan on going home again. The weekly mortality bills were shrinking as fast as they had swelled and early in the new year the dead were being numbered in dozens instead of hundreds. On the first of February Charles returned to Whitehall, leaving his wife and most of his servants behind. His subjects were pitifully glad to see him, and he moved among them to the tune of hysterical cheers for this sign that the epidemic was over. The church bells were now ringing merrily as his Majesty entered a palace newly painted to receive him and with all bed linen carefully aired to rid it of any lingering infection.

The capital to which he returned was sadly thinned, but it is doubtful if he noticed the change. Something between one and two hundred thousand of London's half million people had perished in the plague, but they were nearly all of the order which royalty never saw. At Whitehall itself not a single familiar face was missing from the King's circle. A few weeks after his arrival, the whole court rejoined him in full splendour. While poor labourers, artisans and shopkeepers crept out after their long siege of terror to ask each other who of their friends was still alive, the wealthy quickly forgot all about it. The grass that had grown up between the cobblestones of the City and in the paving at Whitehall was soon trampled down. The coaches, which for a few days were quite a novelty, so long had they been absent from the streets, lurched along in their accustomed number. The theatres were crowded again. Business revived as much as the state of war would permit. The court beauties, preceded some weeks by the Queen, returned to Whitehall and it was generally agreed that England had come bravely through one more purifying test.

Nineteen

THE plague, beginning while the nation waited for one naval battle, ended in the midst of general expectations of another. The money voted by Parliament and the sale of some Crown lands, the King's private estate during his lifetime, had provided the means for fitting out the fleet. James did not commend it this time, for men were beginning to ask why he had not more closely followed up his victory of the year before. The new armada sailed in two sections, one under Monk, the other commanded by Rupert.

A division of forces had been necessitated because Louis of France was suddenly scrupulous about his oath. He said he could no longer remain idle while his Dutch allies were attacked. He meant that he did not wish to see England become too strong. To the considerable enthusiasm of English patriots, who were always pleased to send their armies away to fight France, Charles declared war, making it quite plain in his proclamation that he would welcome peace, a statement which the fire-eaters denounced as weakness of spirit.

As it turned out Louis was merely making a gesture. He gave the Dutch almost no material aid, although he did force the English to divide their fleet and snatched for himself a stray colony or two in odd corners of the world. He took care not to hazard his own fleet, although Rupert was detached from Monk's force to prevent a junction of the allies.

While the sailors were looking for each other in the Channel, Charles was forgetting all about them for a few weeks' fun at Tunbridge Wells. His wife had gone there to take the baths in the hope that such treatment would enable her to bear a child, and the court had followed. The resort was one of the most attractive places in England. Scores of tiny but comfortable houses were given over to the courtiers, who enjoyed them as a novelty and had a splendid time playing at being rural.

They did not, however, miss the attractions of urban life. All the gayeties of London had trooped to Tunbridge. There were gambling, dancing, music, sauntering, gossip. There were also the King's Players, ready to perform all the newest dramas. The company included two women who had become the darlings of the capital and were generally esteemed the most beautiful actresses to appear on the stage. Nell Gwyn and Moll Davis had both come from the ranks of the orange girls who sold fruits in the theatres while exchanging jests and making assignations with the gallants in the pit. The King noticed them for the first time at Tunbridge. He was particularly struck with Nelly's joyous rendering of comic parts and by Moll's pathetic little song as Celiana, " My lodging is on the cold ground." At the moment, however, his Majesty was too much occupied with the contrasting charms of Lady Castlemaine and Frances Stuart to give more than a play-goer's regard to the young actresses.

He was back in Whitehall in time to receive news which cooled the nation's war fever and jolted the King into busying himself more than usual in public affairs. Monk had met the Dutch and although outnumbered heavily thought it became his honour to fight. He thoroughly despised his enemies because he had beaten them for Cromwell. Besides, his courage was of that obvious sort which is closely related to folly. Through two long summer days he shot it out with a greatly superior force, stubbornly refusing in the exaltation of his pugnacious instincts to consider for a moment the terrible loss of life and ships which he was causing. On the third day Rupert arrived, so the slaughter was able to continue. The rivals, quite " punch drunk," fought each other to a standstill. At last, their ammunition exhausted, the surviving ships drew reluctantly apart, but the English suffered additional losses by running into shoals in the belief that their enemies were pursuing them.

In both belligerent countries the shambles was celebrated as a triumph, but there was little heart in the rejoicings, for each knew how badly it had been battered. Charles, who had listened to the distant thunder of the guns from Whitehall, was disappointed by the unintelligent bravery his commander had displayed. Others took their cue from him and openly criticized the General's conduct. Their discussions of this point were almost as free as the talk of his Majesty's momentary coolness toward Lady Castlemaine.

Secure in six years of the King's favour, the Countess had taken to overstepping the bounds of his good nature. He had frequently interfered to protect their children from her violent outbursts of temper. He had showed annoyance at her repeated, inconvenient requests for money or places. But when he really made his displeasure felt, he chose the most unlikely reason. Barbara had been rude to Queen Catherine, and all those who remembered how the mistress had been placed in a position to insult the wife, were openly amazed that Charles resented it. But resent it he did, and forbade the Countess the privilege of coming to Whitehall. The tiff was of short duration. His Majesty could not nurse a grudge. In a few days he recalled Barbara to court.

He himself was absent from Whitehall for a short time. He joined the fleet to see just how badly battered it had been. For several days he lived in the bustle and noise of a navy yard, directing repairs, and in a remarkably short time the ships were standing out to sea again to meet a renovated Dutch fleet. This time the fighting was less brisk and the English could claim the victory, for they were left in possession of the field while the enemy fled back to port. However, the triumph could not be followed up to the full for the English ships were undermanned. The rough and ready methods of conscription by which unwary members of the proletariat were dragged off to sea proved unavailing. After Monk's bloody fiasco, the men of the people were not venturing out of their holes, where they could easily hide or were in sufficient force to defy the press gangs.

Their betters were still celebrating the victory when a mightier force than the press gang drove the reluctant seamen out into the open. Shortly after midnight on Sunday, the second of September, fire broke out in the shop of one Farynor, the King's baker, in Pudding Lane, a typically narrow, dirty alley lined with tall houses leaning forward until they nearly met their opposite neighbours. Before anyone was awakened, the fire had spread to adjoining houses in the direction of Thames Street, only ten doors away, where rows of warehouses filled with oil, tallow and hemp led to wharves piled high with timber, hay and coal.

By three o'clock in the morning, the blaze was visible all the way across the city where Mr. Pepys saw it but was so little impressed that he went back to bed. When he rose again later Sunday morning he realized his error and rushed to see what was to be seen. No one was trying to combat the blaze, which had assumed such proportions that most of those who saw it were stunned. Men and women who had escaped with only their lives from burning houses stood about wailing. Their neighbours were working madly to save valuables from buildings not yet hit. Crowds from more distant parts of the city watched the flames as a brisk wind sent the wall of fire marching slowly north and west.

Pepys, marvelling at the heat and noise and smoke, hurried to Whitehall. He was the first to bring news that the fire was beyond control. Charles heard his story and sent him back with instructions for the Lord Mayor to pull down houses in the path of the flames. Pepys found the Mayor, Sir Thomas Bludworth, but the poor man, quite unequal to the emergency, " cried like a fainting woman, 'Lord! what can I do? I am spent; people will not obey me.' "

The King's plans for stopping the fire were quite ineffective. At fast as houses were pulled down, the flames leaped the gap thus made and rolled on towards the heart of the city. Before the slowly advancing billows a mob of panicky refugees moved sadly, carrying with them their household treasures. Some of them transported their goods from one place to another three or four times as the fire overtook them. No one slept in London that night; the work of salvage went on by the bright light from the burning houses. In the morning Charles came down the river in his royal barge to watch the magnificent spectacle, receive reports and give orders for the maintenance of order.

By Tuesday many men were ready to despair, for the fire was still spreading and not even sacred edifices were immune from its fury. Early in the morning Charles was on horseback, riding into the city with James and a few nobles for company. Over his shoulder he had flung a bag of gold pieces which he scattered among the workmen who were still trying to create a gap which the flames could not leap.

All along the front of fire his Majesty rode, encouraging the men with words and gold, and inspiring them to renewed efforts by the force of example. Wherever the fire seemed hottest he dismounted and actually risked his royal person. Shovel in hand he toiled, now in Cripplegate, now at the Temple, beside the rabble of London. He ventured as near to the fire as any of them. He exposed himself as freely as any to the dangers of falling walls and debris. He and his brother splashed through mud and water, their silks and laces begrimed and scorched, their faces black with smoke. It was the scene of which Dryden sang

> Now day appears and with the day the King,
> Whose early care had robbed him of his rest;
> Far off the cracks of falling houses ring
> And shrieks of subjects pierce his tender breast.
>
> Near as he draws, thick harbingers of smoke
> With gloomy pillars cover all the place;
> Whose little intervals of night are broke
> By sparks that drive against his sacred face.

For two days Charles laboured as arduously and as vainly as any of his subjects. Only once did he pause in his round of manual work, inspection and consultation. He stopped for some minutes to watch the terrible splendour of St. Paul's all ablaze, the molten lead of the roof running down in fiery streams, the glorious dome rising like a torch from the sea of fire made by ten thousand houses burning all at once.

* * *

Gunpowder was now being used to demolish buildings in the line of the conflagration, but not until Thursday when the wind changed was there any checking the advance. For days thereafter the debris of the burned city smouldered so hotly that men could not venture into what had once been London. More than thirteen thousand buildings had been destroyed. Their owners were camping by the thousands in the fields outside what was left of the city.

Even before the danger was over, a popular cry of vengeance was raised above the roar of the flames. Men cried that England's enemies had fired the city, and at the height of the excitement foreigners were not safe in the streets. The disaster was blamed variously upon the Dutch, the French and the Catholics, and only the King's firmness prevented the outraged citizens from massacring these hated classes.

Charles was giving all his energies to his country for the moment, and no man in it was so well able to handle the situation. His quick intelligence, sound judgment and a calm that was proof against any mere disaster, allied to the wave of popularity which his theatrical heroism during the fire had created, enabled him to quiet the fears and angers of the nation. By his orders, all suspected persons were brought before him for examination. Some of them arrived sadly mauled by their captors, but once in the King's hands they were safe, and the day the fire was checked, Charles rode out to Moorfields, where most of the homeless were encamped, to promise them his paternal care. Sitting his horse in the midst of a woebegone crowd which had not, however, forgotten its loyalty in its misery, he assured them that they had not been the victims of any plot, that he had himself questioned every suspect and that they could rely upon him to see that justice would be done at all times.

He had thrown away the chance to gain his own political ends by exploiting a popular prejudice because he hoped the people would believe him in spite of the prejudice. They did, and the cheers which greeted him gave Dryden material for the lines

No thought can ease them but their Sovereign's care,
Whose praise the afflicted as their comfort sing;
E'en those whom want might drive to just despair,
Think life a blessing under such a King.

The fire's death and the abatement of popular fears of a massacre, which the timid believed had been planned by the enemy to follow the fire, did not by any means put an end to Charles' and London's troubles. First of all came the care of the homeless and the starving. The King headed the subscription for their relief, saw it organized and then plunged into the task of rebuilding his capital. While the ashes were still warm, he issued a proclamation declaring that all new construction should be done according to a general plan so that London would " rather appear to the world as purged with fire (in how lamentable a manner soever) to a wonderful beauty and comeliness, than consumed by it."

His Majesty had glorious plans for the future of London. He was more active than anyone else in setting about the improvement of the city. While others thought of nothing but bare necessities, he insisted on considering the day when luxuries could be added. Most of his schemes were fated to be crushed by the invincible forces of poverty, ignorance and carelessness, and some were not realized for centuries afterwards. He succeeded in his efforts only to the extent that London rose from its ashes quite a different place than it had been. But his dream of wide, orderly streets lined with noble buildings and leading into spacious squares was lost.

He ordered that " no man whatsoever shall presume to erect any house or building, great or small, but of brick or stone." He decreed that all the principal streets were to be wide enough that the buildings on one side could not catch fire from the other. He appointed Christopher Wren, an architect he admired, to be " Surveyor-General and Principal Architect for rebuilding the whole City, the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, and all the Principal Churches, with other Structures." He had Wren draw up a plan of boulevards and plazas and straight streets for the City to follow. It was an admirable work, but it bore no resemblance to the London that actually grew up.

Even after it was apparent that his visions would not materialize, Charles continued to work for the improvement of the City, for he was not easily discouraged by partial failure. He advocated wider streets in vain; he suggested sites for markets and public buildings; he succeeded in keeping the city wall, which had artificially congested the town, from being rebuilt. But the work went on slowly and thousands of families spent the winter, an unusually severe one, in flimsy huts or the cellars of what had once been their homes. Many others never did come back to the City. Shopkeepers especially found that it was better to be near the centre of fashion, and set up their new establishments in the Strand and around Covent Garden.

In contrast with desolated London, Whitehall was very gay that winter with masques and dances and the usual theatres. The war was quite forgotten except in those thoughtful circles where Clarendon ruled, for nothing could be done about it. No money was anywhere available to fit out another fleet capable of offering battle to the

Dutch. It was decided to fight entirely on the defensive with what small ships were undamaged. As a result the citizens of London, already visited by plague and fire, were made acquainted at first hand with war.

It was only a nodding acquaintance, but it threw the city into a panic and went into history as the greatest disgrace English sea-power ever sustained. The Dutch, finding no fleet came out to meet them, became very bold and quite fearless. They sailed up the Thames at last, and actually burned shipping at Chatham. The raid was in revenge for Monk's burning of a Dutch port the year before, but a cry of horror went up from Englishmen. Never before had their maritime honour been so outraged. Parliamentarians who had refused supplies to put the fleet in fighting trim were loudly demanding investigations, the fathers of all subsequent Parliamentary investigations and fully up to the standard of their children. But popular fears were in some measure allayed — and in some measure turned to indignation — by the announcement that the King had not been alarmed. Indeed, while the Dutch guns were booming, English battleships burning and London, made nervous by recent disaster, trembled, Charles had been very gay in Lady Castlemaine's company.

Twenty

PEACE was now England's greatest need, and Charles set himself the task of winning by guile what his navy had not been able to achieve by force. His first step was to detach Louis from the Dutch. This proved unexpectedly easy. The Sun King was temperamentally hostile to the republic. He coveted their territory more than he desired English colonies. He had no real quarrel with England, nor had national pride been inflamed by actual fighting sufficiently to keep a war going.

Indeed, there had been only one real battle between the Kings. That was staged on the field of men's fashions, and Louis was clearly the victor, thanks to a surprise attack which completely discomfited his rival.

Just after the Fire, Charles had suddenly wearied of the complicated fripperies which were the adornment of court fops and which he had helped to introduce from France. The sweeping plumes of hats, the long curls of periwigs, the fancifully embroidered coats, the laces and ruffles and ribbons and chains which were the essentials of the well-dressed man became to Charles, in a moment of petulant common sense, quite ridiculous. He decided to change the fashions. He designed for himself — and where he led the most dandified beau at Whitehall followed, no matter how reluctantly — a costume of sober colours and plain tailoring. The long black coat, slashed here and there to show the white shirt, and the close fitting waistcoat unfortunately combined to give the wearer much the appearance of a penguin, not unlike the evening dress of centuries later. But no one in England dared argue with the first gentleman of his age, and the court was obediently getting itself into the new garments when Louis heard about it. He promptly dressed all his footmen in his English cousin's uniform, and the new style was blown out of existence by a gale of laughter.

Charles was quite willing to admit defeat if it would help the cause of peace. But he did not want the Dutch to suspect his designs lest they present counter-arguments to his pacific plans, so the negotiations were carried on most secretly. War had not stopped the mails, and Charles suddenly began to write long dutiful letters to his mother in Paris. At the same time Louis grew quite solicitous about his aunt, and arrangements for peace were concluded in the epistles which Henrietta Maria received from her son and nephew.

Deprived of French support, and fearing French attacks would follow, the Dutch were also anxious for a cessation of hostilities. After all the fighting, nothing was changed save that each country kept its inconsiderable conquests. England retained New York, which Charles had given to his brother, but she lost the much more important island of Surinam.

Nevertheless, Charles did not hesitate to claim the treaty as a triumph for his rule. Since it made an excuse for bonfires and general rejoicing, a good many of his subjects were willing to believe him. He had a medal struck to commemorate his victories over the Dutch, and for the first time the figure of Britannia appeared on an English coin. The artist, Jan Roettier, had taken Frances Stuart as his model for the goddess, at Charles' request, and ever since, her handsome profile and graceful figure have adorned all England's copper.

By the time the medal was minted, Frances was gone from court. Behind her Whitehall seethed with excited gossip in which the women who did not like her took the lead by predicting that she would never come back again. The most admired beauty in England had got herself married. Her friends were all intensely surprised, although she had made no secret of her desire to find a husband. She had even been quoted as declaring her intention of taking " any gentleman of £1,500 a year who would have her in honour."

At this point there appeared another suitor, also named Charles Stuart. This one was Duke of Richmond and Lennox, a very distant cousin of the King, twice a widower, dull, plain, without a fortune to match his high rank. He offered respectability with his title, and Frances was inclined to accept it. Charles could not conceal his anger. The court watched eagerly the unusual spectacle of the master in a temper, and most of them enjoyed it. Only a few thought it was not proper. Clarendon was one of them. He believed it would be well for the country if the situation were clarified. The shrewd old man realized that only the question of money was keeping Frances from making up her mind, so he took it upon himself to assure her that a kinsman of royalty would not be allowed to want.

A few days later Charles found his cousin of Richmond sitting beside Frances' pillow. Ladies of the most unimpeachable virtue often received gentlemen in their bedrooms, but the King flew into an exceedingly unreasonable, jealous passion. The Duke fearing violence withdrew hastily from the lady's apartments and from Whitehall, leaving his Majesty engaged in a bitter quarrel with his beloved. He used a good deal of language he later regretted, while she answered him with spirit, declaring it was intolerable that her privacy should be thus disturbed, that she would receive whom she liked or would crave permission to retire from court. Charles was quite put in his place.

The prudent Richmond, although he had taken himself out of reach of his cousin's anger, did not cease his wooing. He did it at long range, so successfully that one March evening Frances slipped out of Whitehall, stepped into his waiting coach and posted with him to his country place in Kent. Charles heard about it only after they were married, and he allowed his wrath free reign, a most unusual display. He swore he would never see the lady again. He forbade her husband to show himself at court. He actually sulked, and vented his spleen on unoffending bystanders. His attitude became the subject, not only of gossip, but of diplomatic despatches and family correspondence. It was so freely broadcast to the whole world that Charles felt he ought to explain himself to the one person whose good opinion he valued.

“You may thinke me ill-natured,” he wrote to Minette, “but if you consider how hard a thing 'tis to swallow an injury done by a person I had so much tendernesse for you will in some degree excuse the resentment I use towards her; you know my good nature enough to beleeve that I could not be so severe if I had not great provocation, and I assure you her carriage towards me has been as bad as breach of frindship and faith can make it, therefore I hope you will pardon me if I cannot so soon forgett an injury which went so neere my hart."

His friends, surprised as they were by his jealousy, were still more surprised by the implacability of his anger. In the past he had never been able to cherish anger for more than a few days, even against those who had offended him more grievously than most people thought Frances had. But now months passed, and he refused to relent. The objects of his fury had not expected that, and they began to think of emigrating to the fief of Aubigny in France, which was attached to the Duchy of Richmond.

Then, just as the court had grown accustomed to the King's fixed resolve never to countenance them again, he furnished another surprise. Eight months after the elopement, he summoned the Duke and Duchess back to court and received them with real kindness. They settled down for the winter in Somerset House, gave receptions which his Majesty graced with his presence and entertained the King so privately that all London believed the favours which Frances had withheld as a maid she was granting now she was a wife. Charles was on such familiar terms at her home that he would slip out of his apartments of an evening, down the backstairs and row himself all alone in a little boat to Somerset House. One night he was actually seen scrambling nimbly over the garden wall — the water-gate was locked — and disappearing in the shrubbery. London thought it most unkingly behaviour. The reconciliation was so complete, so sudden and so characteristic that Minette rallied her brother on his inability to stick to his resolutions.

" If you," he retorted amiably, " were as well acquainted with a little fantastical gentleman called Cupide as I am, you would neither wonder, nor take ill, any suden changes which do happen in the affaires of his conducting."

The " little fantastical gentleman " was devoting a good deal of his attention to the King's affairs. Charles at last discovered in the actresses he had admired in Tunbridge Wells more intimate charms. About the time of his reconciliation with Frances Stuart, he removed one of its finest ornaments from the stage. He commanded Nell Gwyn to be brought to him, and she almost never returned to the theatre save as a spectator.

She was a woman such as Charles had never known before. He had even been heard to doubt that such creatures existed, for she had both beauty and brain. The King actually enjoyed her conversation. She had a merry humour, and courtiers observed the strange spectacle of a man who heartily despised feminine intellect, exercising his wits upon a woman instead of making love to her. Of course he liked it. He soon found he could not get along without Nelly, and their relations were so comradely that Bishop Burnet remarked:

"He never treated her with the decencies of a mistress."

Nelly did not complain of that. She was not avaricious, and never sought more than the £4,000 a year Charles allowed her. Her good nature, generosity and almost ostentatious abstention from politics made her universally popular from the first, and very few, even of those who declared women were ruining the King, blamed any of the country's evils on Nelly. She laughed and danced and sang her way through life, ridiculing without a particle of malice the court, the people, her lover and herself. She spoke frequently of the days when she had been kept by Charles, Lord Buckhurst, and she always called him her

Charles the First. But she distinguished herself among royal mistresses by remaining faithful to Charles the Second. She actually resented suggestions that it was usual for women in her position to take additional lovers. To one gentleman who offered to pay her gambling debts if she would accept him, she retorted indignantly:

" I am no such sportswoman as to lay the dog where the deer should lie."

This " indiscreetest and wildest creature that ever was in a court " had been brought up as a slavey in a brothel, but was sent out as an orange girl as soon as it became apparent that she would be pretty. She was twenty years younger than Charles, and she had never known anything but the sordid life of cheap bawdy houses, the meretricious glitter of the Restoration theatre and now the intriguing fickle gayety of Court. She continued to be quite the same sort of person through all the changes of her life. Though other mistresses came and went, Nelly remained. She was always shocking the court, even that court which prided itself upon its sophistication, for she referred publicly to revels which were usually forgotten. Once when she wanted a gold piece to reward a musician at a court function, she asked Charles for it, but he had no money in his pocket. He appealed to James, but the Duke of York was also penniless.

" Lord! " exclaimed Nelly in her best Drury Lane manner so that all the court could hear, " what company I have fallen into! "

In even more public places she would call loudly across the park:

" Charles, I hope I shall have your company at night, shall I not? "

Her sense of humour was occasionally as coarse as her lover's. When her stage colleague, Moll Davis, was sent for by the King, Nelly appeared to be all kindness. A few hours before the assignation, she plied Moll with compliments and sweetmeats, the latter stuffed with the most powerful purgative known to the science of the day.

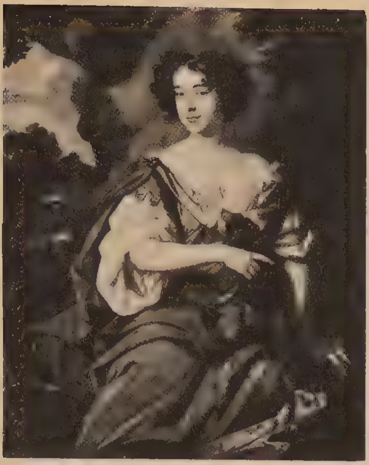
Although Nelly amused him more than anyone he knew, Charles was still spending as much time as possible at Somerset House. It was during this period that in reply to one of Minette's items of news he wrote:

"I am sorry to finde that cucolds in France grow so troublesome. They have been inconvenient in all countries this last year."

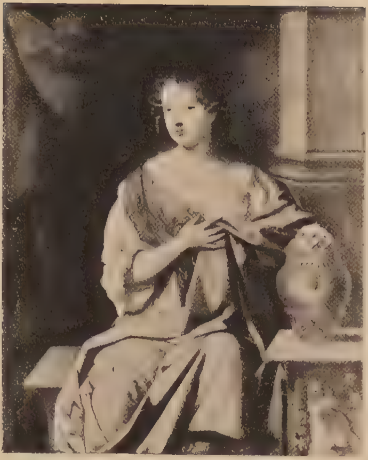
The end of La Belle Stuart's reign over his heart was near at hand. In the Spring of 1668 she fell ill of smallpox which left her beauty slightly marred, a circumstance which effectively cooled the King's ardour, although they remained excellent friends. But during her illness he was quite the distracted lover. He spent hours in the sickroom cheering the patient. He wrote long letters to his sister apologizing for forgetting everything else in his concern for Frances' illness, worrying about her recovery, hoping she would not be marked badly. He was so anxious about her that it was only as an afterthought that he added:

"My wife miscarried this morning, and though I am troubled at it, yett I am glad that 'tis evident she was with childe, which I will not deny to you, till now I did feare she was not capable of. The Physicians do intend to put her into a course of physique which they are confident will make her holde faster next time."

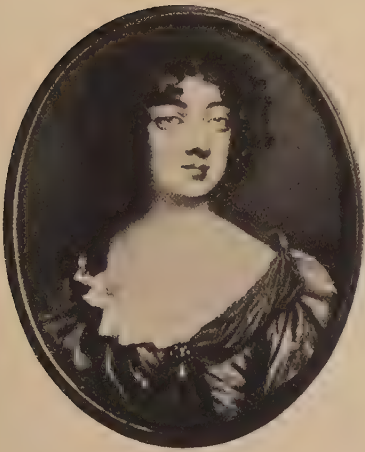
But no medicines, no charms, no prayers, no baths could give Catherine the child she so greatly desired. She swallowed gallons of nasty compounds, she wore all sorts of rings and amulets and tokens; she made regular pilgrim-



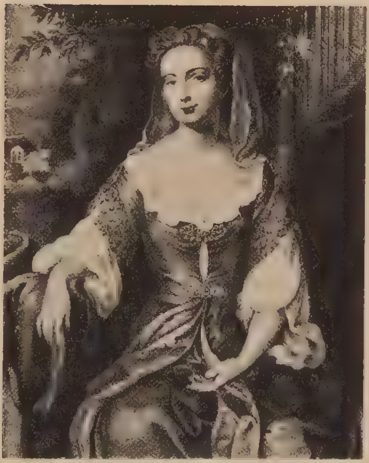
Nell Gwyn



Moll Davis



Lucy Walter



Mary Lawson

ages from the cold water of Tunbridge to the hot springs of Bath. She was sedulous in her devotions. And periodically she was mortified and shamed by her husband's mistresses, who had already presented him with eight children, all alive and at court where their fond father could make much of them.

Twenty-one

CHARLES had not been allowed to give his amours and his domestic problems the undivided attention which he was popularly supposed to lavish upon them. All during the trouble over Frances Stuart and his budding affair with Nelly, he was pestered with politics. Plague, fire and the ignominious end of the war had left the country in the critical frame of mind to be expected after such a series of disasters. Parliament, voicing with exaggerated insistence the popular cry, demanded explanations and a scapegoat. Charles was ready with his story, and they picked their own victim.

The Houses could not be appeased with reasonable speeches. Royal officers and the King himself assured them that the plague and fire had not been the fiendish work of mortal men. They listened sceptically and began to talk of doing something about Popery. His Majesty's ministers explained that there was no more money to carry on the war, and that the country's credit was exhausted. They cried angrily that they had appropriated unprecedented sums, that Oliver had beaten the Dutch at far less expense, that their money had all gone to the King's mistresses and profligate friends.

But they pressed these points only so far as it helped them obtain the sacrifice they sought. The man upon whom they had fixed was Clarendon, who found himself saddled with the responsibility but without the power of a Prime Minister. The unfortunate Earl had aroused the envy, the hatred and distrust of all except a few old friends, and he had lost the affection of his master. So when the full fury of Parliament was turned against him, Charles made no move to save him.

The poor old man was doomed for what he considered his virtues. His strict attention to duty and the King's unostentatious manner of working led the Parliamentarians to believe that Clarendon initiated every policy. They blamed him for the war and its disasters. They declared he was the real author of that disgraceful transaction, the sale of Dunkirk to the French. They firmly believed that he had purposely engineered Charles' marriage to a barren wife so that his own grandchildren by Anne Hyde would inherit the throne. They accused him of advising his master to raise a large standing army so he could rule autocratically without a Parliament. At last the House of Commons worked itself up to the point of preparing impeachment proceedings. The House formally demanded that the Lords arrest the Chancellor and send him to the Tower, but the Upper House, always jealous of its prerogative, refused to bow to a plebeian order until the impeachment was actually launched.

Clarendon defended himself stubbornly and courageously, but he made the mistake of relying upon conscious innocence. He knew he was guiltless of all the charges levelled against him, and in spite of his familiarity with Charles' character he did not believe that a King who owed so much to a faithful servant could remain neutral. Nor did he quite appreciate the bitterness which was directed against him. So little did he understand the workings of unscrupulous minds that in later years, reviewing the conflict, he decided that the magnificent palace he was building had aroused the whole tempest of envy. The building was indeed a symbol upon which an angry populace seized as concrete evidence of his crimes. They called it " Dunkirk House " and clamoured that it had been paid for with the price of the nation's disgrace. Only force prevented them from tearing it down.

The Chancellor's private code of morals had raised him enemies as dangerous as had his supposed faults. His outspoken condemnation of the dissolute lives led at Whitehall earned him the bitter hatred of the King's best friends. He had deliberately insulted such vindictive persons as Sir Henry Bennett, now Lord Arlington, Lady Castlemaine, the young Earl of Rochester, Buckingham and a score of others. They now had their revenge. They used against him the most potent weapon in their arsenal, ridicule, and it served to point those of Clarendon's faults which most annoyed the King — pomposity, insistence on tiresome forms, punctilio, solemnity, vanity and a habit of plain-spoken criticism.

The Earl himself dated the King's altered feelings from the days when Charles complained that his chief minister would not support religious toleration. Thereafter his Majesty withheld that full confidence to which the Chancellor had become accustomed. Indeed, Clarendon had been retained in his high office only because he was an official who saved the King a great deal of trouble in the dull administrative field of politics, and for several years the little clique of private foes had been quite unable to dislodge the old man. But now that his usefulness was over he would have fallen without so much popular outcry.

Nevertheless, Clarendon was sure he was the victim of unscrupulous favourites. He shared the general view that Charles was the slave of his mistress and his friends, and he failed to realize that the King had ideas of his own, quite as fixed as Clarendon's. They were less loudly insisted upon and less energetically pursued, but they existed, and the King had learned that whenever he proposed a certain policy he was more than likely to find his principal minister putting obstacles in the way.

A less conventional reason for Charles' indifference to his Chancellor's fate was of more importance in deciding it. The well-meaning Earl could not conceive how irritating his interminable lectures on duty, application, morality and piety could be to a man who did not believe in any of these things. He had not changed his tone towards his master since they had started for Bristol together during the Civil Wars. Even at fifteen Charles had not liked to be hectored. At thirty-seven he found it intolerable, but he hid his feelings under his usual courtesy and good humour. Clarendon himself remarked that his Majesty was " a patient hearer " but he did not realize how much boredom lay behind the patience. Nor did he appreciate how certainly any bore would lose royal favour.

All that he had left to rely upon was the King's sense of gratitude. It was a weak reed. No man had a more convenient memory. Charles could forget great services as readily as he could forget great injuries; his clemency and his ingratitude proceeded from the same source. If he was

> That merciful King who has pardoned more
> Than all our Kings e'er pardoned before

he was equally the Charles of whom Rochester wrote

His father's foes he doth reward,
Preserving those that cut off's head.
Old Cavaliers, the Crown's best guard,
He lets them starve for want of bread.

Never was any King indued
With so much grace and gratitude!

Clarendon should have known his case was hopeless under such a master. He should have known that Charles would never dream of endangering the monarchy for the sake of any subject, not though he were reminded of Strafford and the remorse which Strafford's King had carried to the scaffold. Any adequate defence of the Chancellor might easily jeopardize the throne, for men were talking freely of the good old days of the Commonwealth and how much more cheaply, not to say effectively, Oliver had conducted his wars. It was an ominous sign. From the standpoint of expediency, it was no time for a King to be pitting himself against the popular will. Hatred of Clarendon had become so strong that there was a rumour, fathered by the wish, that the Duke of Monmouth would be legitimized to prevent Anne Hyde's children from succeeding to the throne.

During the height of the agitation, Charles introduced a soothing note by proroguing Parliament for a few months. It saved the Chancellor from impeachment for the time being, but the King was determined that when he met his Commons again, they would be on good terms. He would throw them Clarendon as a sacrifice, and this talk of Commonwealths, abdication, legitimizing of bastards and other unpleasantness would stop.

So while Clarendon thought the prorogation indicated that royalty was on his side, Charles was devising an easy method of getting back the Great Seal, symbol of the Chancellor's office. He had found Monk a useful man for dirty work, and he hoped the formal Clarendon would have sufficient respect for the rank of the Duke of Albemarle to yield gracefully. But the Earl did not want to be sacrificed. He told the Duke that he had received the Seal from the King's hands. He would only surrender it to his Majesty in person.

Charles shrank from an interview. He was not altogether easy in his mind about throwing his old tutor to the wolves, and he knew there would be a scene. He hated scenes. So he sent James to explain that he really meant what he said. The Duke of York, who had fought hard under his wife's direction to save his father-in-law, was the bearer of soft messages. He talked as though it were all for the Chancellor's own good. He argued that resignation would avert impeachment. But the Earl stood upon his dignity and the justice of his cause. He welcomed a trial which would make his innocence clear to the world. He would like to explain that to his master before he gave up his office.

At last Charles consented to listen, but he did it in a manner which made obvious to the whole court the changed attitude towards his minister. In the past when Clarendon had even a mild attack of gout, Charles had always gone to his house to transact business so that the old man would not have to leave his couch. Now, although the Earl suffered tortures at every step, the King made him come to Whitehall for his dismissal. Furthermore he set the time at ten o'clock in the morning, despite Clarendon's known fondness for lying late abed.

The meeting was quite as painful as Charles had expected. Clarendon was ushered into the royal presence through a staring, hostile crowd of courtiers who could hardly contain their curiosity. For months the Chancellor's crimes had been the most general topic of conversation in London. England was enjoying her first political crisis since the Restoration, and a politically-minded people were making the most of this rare opportunity, a pleasure they missed all the more after the orgy of crises which the Civil Wars, the Commonwealth and the Protectorate had given them. It was one of the advantages of a place at court that the holder had a privileged seat from which to watch such events as that which was about to take place.

Clarendon was the first to approach the business when at length he had passed the watching faces and was safe in the King's closet. He asked bluntly to be told of his faults and Charles was embarrassed.

" He had not anything to object against him," the Earl wrote when he described the scene for posterity, " but must always acknowledge that he had always served him honestly and faithfully and that he did believe that never King had a better Servant, and that he had taken this Resolution for his own Convenience and Security, and that he had verily believed it had been upon his Consent and Desire."

His Majesty repeated that nothing but resignation could save so unpopular a minister from impeachment. He added that voluntary retirement would so appease the Commons that they would be ready to grant the King anything he wanted. Clarendon retorted with a long speech in which he expatiated on his many services to the House of Stuart, his unquestionable loyalty, his innocence of any fault, and what great damage it would be to the King in the official world if he cast off so good and faithful a servant. They argued for two hours, Charles proving himself once more "a patient hearer." At the end he "seemed much troubled and irresolute," but he brought the interview to a close by repeating his earlier insistence that it was necessary the Chancellor resign.

The crowd that had watched him come in was still on hand to see him go. They hoped to glean from his demeanour the result of the conversation, nor were they disappointed. Never able to control his expression, the Earl showed quite clearly by his dejected manner that he had lost, and the taste of injustice was made even more bitter for the poor, gouty, old man that he had now to witness the open triumph of enemies he despised. Few of them were generous enough to withhold their exclamations of joy until he was out of hearing, and the Lord Chancellor of England, the faithful loyalist who had made possible his master's Restoration, left the royal palace for the last time to the accompaniment of gleeful whispers, smirks and cries of delight. None of it was lost upon the disgraced statesman as he limped painfully through the galleries of Whitehall to his coach. Of the most galling moment of all, he wrote:

"The Lady [so he always carefully referred to the Countess of Castlemaine], the Lord Arlington and Mr. May looked together out of her open window with great Gaiety and Triumph, which all people observed."

The observers remarked upon it with less restraint than the victim showed. One of Pepys' favourite gossips, who saw the scene, told him that Barbara had leaped out of bed "and ran out in her smock into her aviary looking into Whitehall garden and thither her women brought her her nightgown, and stood blessing herself at the old man's going away; and several of the gallants of which there were many staying to see the Chancellor return did talk to her in her birdcage, telling her she was the bird of passage." The beaten old man had nothing to reply to the taunts of those about him, for he had never been as strong in repartee as his old friend Ormonde, whose turn for dismissal was near at hand, but who checked Lady Castlemaine's gloating over him with one brief, biting sentence.

"Madam," he told her in the most gentlemanly tones possible as she began to heap curses upon his aged head, "if you live you will grow old."

A few days after his interview with the King, Clarendon surrendered the Seal, but the popular clamour against him was not silenced. Almost the first thing Parliament did when it reassembled was to appoint a Committee of Investigation. There was no constitutional precedent for such proceedings, but Charles was so anxious to put the Commons in good humour that he allowed them to delve into administrative matters which were none of their concern. They found plenty of evidence of waste and inefficiency, but these faults were so common to government that they did nothing about it. However, the Commons used the material for further attacks on Clarendon, and sent articles of impeachment to the Lords. The Upper House was on the point of committing him to the Tower when he took his King's advice, couched almost in terms of command, and fled to France.

For seven years he lived quietly in Montpelier, writing industriously his histories and essays. He was really quite happy studying and remembering himself as a man of action. As he reviewed in volume after volume the events of his life, he would quote himself oracularly on "the practices of the best times" in matters of constitutional law.

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Any argument could be clinched in these works with long, involved sentences beginning " He used to say ——." He was quite free in speaking of the follies and vices of all men save two. So far as his conscience as an historian would permit, he refrained from censuring either of the Kings he had served.

Twenty-two

FOR a time after Clarendon's fall, peace descended upon English politics. The House of Commons, having satisfied its craving for a victim and its curiosity about the more obscure transactions in the war, relapsed into its normal state of uselessness. Seventeenth Century Parliaments, while remarkably learned in theology and the theories of constitutional law, were quite ignorant of the practical problems of government, quite unable to remedy evils in administration. Nevertheless, they were constantly striving to assume control, for the notion that the representatives of the people should govern was becoming firmly rooted in England. Charles, convinced that there could be no success save through absolutism, set himself so firmly against the trend of the age that while he lived the exponents of Parliamentary rule gained nothing but experience.

To achieve success Charles used the oddest set of ministers that was ever given the semblance of power in England. He had to have men to do his bidding, but neither fools nor honest men would do. If he had fools, he would have to do all the work himself, and he had no stomach for that. Honest men would not serve him faithfully in all things because most of them were out of sympathy with his purpose. Indeed, Charles did not believe there were any honest men, and so at times a few did drift into his service but never into his complete confidence.

For the most part the King relied on clever knaves. He was always on better terms with them than with anyone else. He knew they would betray him whenever it served their interest, but he took care to see that they never had sufficient knowledge or authority to make their treasons fatal. While they served him he beat them at their own game of deception.

His first ministry, which men took to calling the Cabal, was composed of five courtiers who were all widely hated and were, with one exception, congenial companions. Sir Thomas Clifford was a Roman Catholic of some ability and pleasant manners. Baron Arlington was witty, shrewd, greedy and quite unscrupulous. Buckingham had many friends, considerable influence, talents when he wished to use them and could be gulled. Baron Ashley, who as Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper had served Cromwell, was the most astute politician of his time and rather too ambitious. Lauderdale, though not exactly beloved personally by his sovereign, could manage Scotland in a severely tyrannical manner and could be used whenever brutality and brains were needed in combination.

To these five men was entrusted every show of authority, and they became inordinately swollen with pride. But in every matter of serious importance, they were commanded or bought or out-manoeuvred by their master. Not one of them ever learned the King's whole mind so when they were tempted out of their very tenuous allegiance, they could never ruin him.

Buckingham was the chief in rank and, when he wished to busy himself with political intrigue, in influence. But for the moment the world was more interested in him as a duelist. The Earl of Shrewsbury, who had been known chiefly in recent years as a complaisant husband, suddenly and unaccountably objected to the attentions which Buckingham was paying his Countess, although he had tolerated more of his wife's lovers than even the gossips cared to count. The Duke killed the husband, to the great scandal of a court which did not expect such encounters to end fatally. He then took the widow to his own home. His wife was a long-suffering woman, but she now protested that she could not live under the same roof with such a profligate creature as my Lady Shrewsbury.

"Why so I thought, Madam," her husband retorted suavely, "And I have ordered your coach to take you to your mother."

To the surprise of fashionable London, the Buckingham-Shrewsbury affair lasted for years. It was, indeed, only broken off by a House of Lords order, made at the instance of guardians of the boy Earl of Shrewsbury, that the Duke cease "conversing or cohabiting" with his mistress and that both "enter into security to the King's Majesty in the sum of ten thousand pounds for that purpose."

There was one other supposed ruler of England at this time — Lady Castlemaine. But she was so far from having that power that she did not even live at Whitehall any longer. Charles had bought Berkshire House for her, and while he still continued to visit her there, he was seeing a good deal more of other women and she of other men. She was quite satisfied so long as she had her pension of £12,000 a year, gifts of a good deal more than that, the deference of those about her and the privilege of selling jobs and her supposed influence. Charles and greedy placemen managed to keep her in funds, but it was beyond the power of the most absolute monarch to save her from ridicule.

There was, for example, the deplorable incident which occurred during Lent in this year of 1668. The apprentice boys and other young hoodlums suddenly developed a grievance. No doubt they could have justly complained of many things, but the one upon which they fixed was that there were bawdy houses in London. Charles, informed of their protests on this score, was frankly puzzled to account for their rage.

"Why," he asked, "Why do they go to them then?"

He did not understand the spirit of the crusaders. In a fit of Lenten virtue the young workers paraded through the streets shouting that such places were ruining the nation and should be torn down. They made a sincere attempt to put through this reform, but the King's guards arrived before they had finished the job. They had, however, destroyed a good many brothels — including four that belonged to the Duke of York — and whipped the miserable inmates through the town, after robbing them of their valuables. The troops restored order; four of the leaders of the riot were hung, and everyone thought the business was ended. But no. One day there appeared and was eagerly received by the reading public a satirical little pamphlet headed:

THE POOR-WHORES PETITION

To the most splendid, illustrious, serene, and eminent Lady
of Pleasure, the Countess of Castlemayne, &c.
The Humble Petition of the Undone Company of poore
distressed Whores, Bawds, Pimps and Pandars &c.

In this work, the victims of the apprentices were represented as pleading with the head of their order for relief and protection in their hour of need. It was promptly followed by an equally popular broadside purporting to be “The Gracious Answer of the most Illustrious Lady of Pleasure, the Countess of Castlem . . . to the Poor-Whores Petition.” It was filled with lofty promises of aid — in the future — and scholarly words of advice, ending:

“Give no Entertainment without Redy Money, lest you suffer Loss. For had we not been careful in that particular, we had neither gained Honour nor Rewards, which are now (as you know) both conferred upon Us.”

Very little effort was made in the reign of Charles to check this species of literature. His Majesty himself enjoyed it. The clerical gentlemen, who exercised most of the censorship, were too busy pursuing such big game as Milton and Hobbes — to whom Charles gave a pension and referred as the bear against which the Church exercised its young dogs — to bother with mere worldly ribaldry. So long as there was humour, no matter how obscene, in the scurrility, the King never objected, although he was himself the object of more crudely vulgar rhymes than any other person in his domains. He was nicknamed “Old Rowley” after a stallion in the royal stud, and even Maids of Honour sang the bawdy ballads in which the two were compared. Charles heard one of them singing the merry verses one day. He knocked at her door and answered the young woman’s startled “Who’s there” with a cheerful “Old Rowley himself, madam, at your service.”

Around him clustered a choice collection of rakes and wits whose heedless, excessively public debauches were magnified and improved by the unchecked gossip-mongers. None of the gay crowd, his Majesty least of all, cared a rap what scandal was reported of them, so the risqué stories were embellished with additional spicy details at every telling. The truth was sufficiently amazing that no lie was disbelieved.

One day it would be a tale of Charles stripped, robbed and only saved from a beating in a very low bawdy house by timely recognition of his identity. A little later there would be a story of a poor but honest girl killing herself for fear of being dragged to a tavern to furnish amusement for the King. Again all London would buzz with the news that Sir Charles Sedley, a popular courtier and playwright, and Lord Buckhurst, Nelly's " Charles the First " and a future distinguished patron of arts, had spent a night in jail for running naked through the streets. Dozens of diaries, books of reminiscence and letters detailed with prurient delight the " burning lusts, the profane and abominable lives."

The profligate Earl of Rochester, whom Charles loved for his father's sake and his own wit, made an enviable reputation disguised as a fortune teller. He obtained his occult knowledge by stationing a man in sentry's uniform before the apartments of the Maids of Honour whose various seductions were eagerly retailed in prose and verse. Rochester, Buckingham and the King were the heroes of most of the stories, but nearly every man and woman in Whitehall figured in one or another until Lady Castlemaine was heard to remark that the first maid in that court to be married would be his Majesty's infant daughter.

At the head of this society, Charles moved, urbane, witty, tolerant of both exaggeration and reproof. He did not care a straw what was said behind his back, and he insisted only upon politeness in his presence.

" Tell Dr. Frampton," he instructed one of his attendants after listening to that preacher inveigh against adultery, " that I am not angry to be told of my faults, but I would have it done in a gentlemanlike manner."

For a reformer who was also a gentleman he could display genuine respect, although it never affected his conduct. He was always patient with his chaplain, " little Ken," a rigorous moralist who often preached against royal sins. During a visit of the court to his city, Ken had in the opinion of all courtiers forfeited all chance of advancement by declaring he would not admit Nell Gwyn into his deanery. But when a new bishop was to be appointed for the see of Bath and Wells, Charles cut short all recommendations with the announcement:

" Odd's fish, who shall have Bath and Wells but the little black fellow who would not give poor Nelly a night's lodging! "

Rochester, the companion of royal revels, understood this generosity well enough to dare deliver into his master's own hands this proposed epitaph:

Here lies our sovereign lord the King,
Whose word no man relies on,
Who never said a stupid thing,
And never did a wise one.

" Ah, my Lord," retorted Charles, " my discourse is mine own; my actions are my ministers'."

As repartee it was not bad. As a statement of fact, it was barely half true. His ministers were doing just what he told them or what he was secretly counteracting. He was playing a complicated game. With Clarendon out of the way, the war over and Parliament dismissed, the people were taking up the old political cry of religion. Catholicism was their great fear, and France, as the most powerful

Catholic country, was the obvious enemy. The Protestant Dutch and Scandinavians were the equally obvious allies.

Charles did not scruple to humour the popular prejudices. He feared neither Catholics, whom he liked as a sect better than any other, nor France, with which country it was still his policy to maintain a close friendship. So while he set Arlington and Sir William Temple, a grave, experienced, sturdily Protestant diplomat, to forming a Protestant League, he was using Clifford and Buckingham, who hated Arlington, to negotiate with France. But behind their backs, in turn, he was conducting with Louis a third treaty. This last was confided to Minette, for in all the world he trusted only her. It was all a little too involved for Louis to grasp quickly. He kept receiving the most contradictory reports from the men who were credited with ruling England, but in the end he was brought to believe what Charles wrote his sister:

" One thing I desire you to take as much as you can out of the King of France's head, that my ministers are anything but what I will have them."

At the moment Temple was putting the finishing touches to a Triple Alliance of England, Sweden and the Netherlands against France, Charles was arranging with his cousin the terms of an agreement which made Temple's work quite meaningless. In both negotiations his Majesty was proving the shrewdness of the second line of Rochester's epitaph. It was a mistake to rely upon the King's word. He was no more sincere in his promises to Louis than in his promises to the Dutch and Swedes.

As the French alliance took form it contained three main clauses. England was to assist France in teaching the Dutch a lesson, which would leave Louis supreme on land and England all-powerful at sea. Charles was to become a Catholic himself and do his best to impose the religion upon his country. Louis was to furnish a cash subsidy until these results were achieved. The third clause was the only one which was stated in clear, unequivocal terms with no strings attached. There were qualifying phrases which rendered the rest of the treaty no more binding than Charles wished to have it.

He did approve of the first, for he was anxious to see the republicans humbled and their trade brought to England. His people had forgotten the hatred of the late war, but their King did not care. As for Catholicism, that was a gesture to flatter Louis. The King of France had become extremely pious, and the hope of bringing England back to the true faith made him overlook the fact that he was getting nothing for his money. The date of Charles' conversion was left to him, and the old religion was to be forced upon his people only when Parliament could be brought to consent. Whenever Louis asked how soon some attempt would be made to bring this about, Charles replied that the time was not yet ripe. He never meant to try at all, and the mere promise could do him no harm as long as his secret was kept. Consequently it was not entrusted to Buckingham, who was permitted to amuse himself with the other clauses. Meanwhile an agreement which gave England great commercial advantages over France was negotiated publicly and was acclaimed with delight by London merchants.

More than a year elapsed before the two secret treaties were ready, the one for the delusion of Buckingham and the other, genuine article to fool Louis. The Duke, full of importance, was treated with great consideration in Paris, presented with ten thousand *livres* for his mistress and for himself a magnificent dress sword, from the hilt of which

French courtiers surreptitiously removed a few diamonds under the pretence of admiring it.

Minette brought the real treaty to Dover on a visit which was ostensibly paid to celebrate her brother's birthday and Restoration anniversary. They were very gay together, spending in splendid entertainments the money which would be forthcoming from Louis. All the chivalry of England was gathered together to do Madame honour, and she herself had brought a large train of attendants. Among them was a languishing, baby-faced beauty, Louise de Queroualle, one of her Maids of Honour. Charles was so smitten with her that he asked that she be left behind, but Minette would not, pleading that she was responsible to the young woman's parents. Charles did not press the point, for he was genuinely sad at his sister's approaching departure. When she finally left, he escorted her half way across the Channel, and ran back three times for a farewell kiss.

He never again saw the one person in the world he remembered to love even when she was not there. Within a year of her visit to England, Minette died — poisoned, it was said, by direction of the Chevalier de Lorraine, her husband's current favourite. Charles, who had received with appropriate emotion but without tears the news of his mother's death a few months before, now burst into a frenzy of rage and grief. Weeping, he listened to the tale of his sister's last days, as brought from Paris by Sir Thomas Armstrong. He had no doubt that the Duc d'Orleans was really to blame, and he cried, “Monsieur is a villain!” However, he could not afford to indulge private feelings. Hastily and much more calmly, he added: “But, Sir Thomas, I beg of you, not a word of this to others.”

It was not at all unusual for a monarch to plunge his country into war for his own personal satisfaction, and Louis became alarmed for the treaty when he learned that Charles would not receive letters from Orleans. He was soon relieved of his fears, however, by assurances that the King of England did not blame him for Minette's death.

In gratitude — and to serve his own ends — he despatched into England the Maid of Honour his cousin had so much admired. Charles greeted her characteristically enough with tearful reminiscences of his sister and proposals of seduction. The rest of the court treated her with a mixture of hatred, fear, envy and flattery. The French were very much pleased. Louis had already tried to govern Charles through an astrologer, but Charles had made the poor fellow predict horse races and back his own reading of the stars. He was soon laughed out of court, a much poorer man than when he arrived. Louise was a better envoy. She quickly made a place but no friends for herself at Whitehall. However, she was a clear-headed young Frenchwoman, and valued the wealth she was able to amass above such affection as was available at court.

She had arrived in time to take the public tongue from rolling around bits of gossip about the King's eldest son. Monmouth had been something of a trial to his father of late, for besides creating scandal he had embroiled the King with his Parliament. The Commons had been discussing the possibility of putting a tax on the theatre, and the King's friends had argued that it was without precedent to tax the King's servants, especially those who were part of his pleasure. Whereupon Sir John Coventry asked whether the King's pleasure lay among the men or the women players, a gross and scandalous expression that was much deplored in the House. Charles did nothing, but Monmouth took it upon himself to avenge his father. He had Sir John set upon and his nose slit. Parliament leaped to the defense of its member and in a debate which did the King no good passed a bill of banishment against Coventry's unnamed assailants and another for the punishment of all attacks attended by personal mutilation.

In less than two months Monmouth was in another scrape. In company with two other young dukes he killed a beadle in cold blood for remonstrating with their roistering, and excitement about this incident ran so high that Charles was obliged to grant his " gracious pardon unto our deare sonne James, Duke of Monmouth, of all Murders, Homicides & Felonies whatsoever at any time before ye 28th day of Feb^{ry} last past, committed either by himselfe alone or together wth any other person or persons."

All through the reign, the traffic in pardons was enormous. The King's good nature made him an easy mark for his friends, who obtained the privilege of selling the royal mercy when they could not get sinecures, pensions, monopolies or Crown lands. Charles looked upon it as a cheap way to gratify his courtiers, for the pardons cost him nothing, and business grew so brisk that he remarked with a smile:

" It is strange that every one of my friends keeps a tame knave."

Even stranger was his Majesty's own tame knave. Thomas Blood was an Irishman who had considered himself grievously wronged because Ormonde as Lord Lieutenant would not permit him to despoil his neighbours. The old royalist had been dismissed from office, but Blood still nursed his grudge. Only the oppressor's life, he decided, could satisfy his outraged honour. He had an Irish flair for the dramatic, and he planned to make his act of justice complete by hanging his victim from the common gallows.

One night Ormonde's coach was stopped, the old man dragged out, bound and secured behind one of three horsemen who trotted rapidly towards Tyburn. Before they got there Ormonde managed to throw himself and his captor to the ground where they were struggling when the watch was heard running towards them. The imaginative murderer was lucky to escape, leaving Ormonde unhurt.

The King's officers were still looking for Thomas Blood when a clergyman of most respectable appearance called at the Tower to see the Crown jewels, which were kept there. In the course of his visit he became friendly with the keeper; the friendship ripened, and a marriage was proposed between the reverend gentleman's daughter and the keeper's son. With this affair as good as settled, the clergyman brought a friend to see the jewels. As one who was practically a member of the family he enjoyed the freedom of the treasure house, and he made use of it by overpowering the keeper. The thieves were passing through the gates towards their waiting horses, when the keeper was accidentally discovered. The alarm was given; the departing guests stopped. Under the clergyman's gown were the bejewelled emblems of royalty; the man himself was quickly recognized as Thomas Blood.

His daring had made him a romantic figure. The King was sufficiently curious to question the fellow himself, and Blood, regarding himself as a dead man, sustained his reputation by giving free rein to his Irish wit. His impudence delighted Charles, who thought that it would be a shame to kill such a pleasant thief. His Majesty interceded personally to win Ormonde's forgiveness, ordered a pardon made out for the attempt on the Crown jewels and gave the ruffian a place at court. Thereafter his Majesty's tame knave cut quite a figure in the more shadowy activities of Whitehall. He gave himself the title of "Colonel," wore laced coats, carried the King's confidential messages, presided over the gaming tables and amassed a tidy fortune from bribes which his fellow countrymen gave for his influence.

Fascinating as Blood's crimes had been, the gossips discussed with even more avidity the progress of the King's affair with Louise de Queronalle, which also filled a good part of the French Ambassador's despatches to his government. Louise was coy, and the Ambassador was greatly alarmed lest the King should decline to give chase. The diplomat was alternately cheered and depressed by the ups and downs of an amour which was being conducted on both sides with all the passion attending a game of chess. One day the puzzled envoy was all optimism, for Louise had dined with him and become suddenly nauseated. But in a few days he was obliged to confess sadly that her illness had not proceeded from the cause he hoped.

She had been made Lady of the Bedchamber to the Queen, who raised no objections. At the same time, danger of indignant protests from a more important potential enemy was removed. Lady Castlemaine was consoled for the prospective loss of her position as first mistress by the honour of a peerage in her own right. She was now created Baroness Nonsuch, Countess of Southampton and Duchess of Cleveland, "in consideration," so ran the patent, "of her noble descent, her father's death in the service of the Crown, and by reason of her personal virtues." To her titles was added the gift of the park and palace at Nonsuch, a favourite resort of Henry VIII.

* * *

The new Duchess accepted her altered position with admirable calm. She easily consoled herself with younger and more handsome men than the King, among them one John Churchill, a penniless but talented and good-looking youth, who was just beginning to make his way at court. His first care was for money, and he succeeded in wresting from his mistress the foundation of what was to become the greatest private fortune in Europe. There was only one flaw in his success at this time; the King still visited Barbara, and one day the future Duke of Marlborough was so unfortunate as to meet Charles in her home. " Old Rowley " cut short all the young man's explanations with a scornful:

" I forgive you, Sir, for I know you do but earn your bread."

To the new Duchess herself he said at about this period:

" Madam, all I ask of you for your own sake is live so for the future as to make the least noise you can, and I care not who you love."

Nevertheless, for old time's sake, he acknowledged as his own the girl she bore some months later. He only assured his friends that the child was not his, and most of them believed that Churchill was the father.

Eager speculation on the duration of a young Frenchwoman's chastity interested the court much more than anybody's children. Louise de Queroualle had plenty of back-biters, and even a few philanthropic advisers. One of the latter was her own countryman, the Seigneur de Saint Evremond, a political exile from France, whose wit and scholarship won from Charles a pension which enabled him to enjoy life and pursue a literary career. Hearing a rumour that Louise was actually so sincere in her aloofness that she planned retirement to a convent, he wrote her a long letter in which he posed a question in the Spanish manner and then proceeded to answer it.

"Which of the two," so ran the question, "is most injurious to the well being of the fair sex, either to abandon themselves wholly to their inclinations or to follow all the dictates of virtue?"

He described for her the drab fate of nuns who had no fervent religious emotions, adding:

"A melancholy life this, dear sister, to be obliged for custom's sake to mourn for a sin one has not committed at the very time one begins to have a desire to commit it."

Comparing judicially the practical advantage of chastity and frailty, he reached the conclusion:

"Happy is the woman who knows how to behave herself discreetly without checking her inclination! For as 'tis scandalous to love beyond moderation, so 'tis a great mortification for a woman to pass her life without one amour. Do not too severely reject temptations, which in this country offer themselves with more modesty than is required, even in a virgin, to hearken to them. Yield, therefore, to the sweets of temptation instead of consulting your pride."

Whether as a result of such sage counsel or in pursuance of the girl's own plans, the French Ambassador's fears were at last definitely soothed. The court had gone to Euston for the races and during a party in Arlington's house a mock marriage between Charles and Louise diverted the entire company save only the sober Mr. Evelyn, who did not attend the ceremonies although he recorded that "the fair lady was bedded one of these nights and the stocking flung after the manner of a married bride; I acknowledge she was for the most part in her undress all day, and that there was fondness and toying with that young wanton. It was with confidence believed she was first made a Miss, as they called these unhappy creatures, with solemnity at this time."

Not everyone thought with the diarist that the poor girl was deserving only of pity. Envy or rejoicing were the usual reactions to her new condition, and the Sun King himself ordered his Ambassador to convey to their countrywoman her own sovereign's sincere congratulations upon her success in attaining so exalted a position as first mistress to the King of England.

Twenty-three

WHILE the court followed with eager interest the rising fortunes of Louise de Querouall, the man they thought was devoting himself wholly to pursuing her was in reality much more assiduous in his pursuit of money. He was not finding it. At the moment the mock marriage was being celebrated at Euston, the " bridegroom " knew that his government was bankrupt.

England was in debt two million pounds; the revenues were mortgaged for at least two years ahead; there was no more credit anywhere. Fortunately, the King was not one to worry, certainly not about mere financial difficulties. His years of excessive familiarity with debt had rendered him immune to such cares. They had also taught him to be singularly resourceful, if not exactly scrupulous, in adopting expedients which would keep his court going.

His whole reign had been a struggle for money; his policy of state had been strictly circumscribed by economic conditions. His habits of living, which looked so much more expensive than they were, intensified the struggle, for Parliament was slow to believe that such an apparently lavish spender could be poor. Yet the King was as pinched as his government. At least once he was without clean linen because he owed his draper £5,000 and the fellow refused to supply more on account. Yet every quarter the grooms of the bedchamber, as part of their traditional fee, made off with the King's clothes, and they did not care whether he had new ones or not. It was very hard to maintain his position as one of the best-dressed men in England.

The whole administration was conducted on the same reckless basis as the royal wardrobe. It was traditional, the only way Englishmen had of muddling through. Everyone realized that it was bad, but no one, not even the King or his Lord Treasurer, could know how bad, for it was no man's business to compare receipts with expenditures, and none knew more than vaguely what either total might be. It was the business of Parliament to supply money and of the King to spend it. When one of them functioned poorly, it created complications. When both were at fault, bankruptcy was inevitable. As Charles rounded out his eleventh year on the throne, the results of both being at fault were becoming apparent.

Parliament had set the revenue at £1,200,000 a year; or rather they had passed a law that the King should have so much. Naturally they took it for granted that he was getting it. But they could see that he was spending on legitimate objects only about two-thirds of that sum and borrowing the rest. The obvious inference, especially when one considered the King's easy, generous nature, was that he squandered one third upon his mistresses and friends.

By blandishments, bribes and the sacrifice of dissenters, he had won some additional income, derived from such unpopular sources as a poll tax and a hearth tax. Still the total was far from £1,200,000 and Parliament had now reached the point of finally refusing more money to a man who was presumably wasting a fortune on his pleasures every year.

Even the King's talents as a lobbyist were exerted in vain. More than any other English monarch he had become a familiar figure in Parliament. He began attending sessions in the Lords in the hope that his presence would discourage speeches against his proposals. It worked just the other way. Noblemen seized the opportunity to point their grievances at the silent spectator on the throne, and Charles wearied of being a target. But the debates themselves amused him — he said they were as entertaining as the play — so he would stand at ease by the fire, listening and watching. Soon it became a recognized part of informal procedure for peers to cluster around him to hear his remarks and ask his advice. He would seize the opportunity to press his opinions, and he became extremely skillful at converting opponents to his way of thinking. Often, too, he pleaded the cause of some court favourite, until it came to be said that Charles Stuart was diligent in urging grants which were quite opposed to the King's interest.

At the moment, the Houses were sure the man had been squandering the sovereign's revenues. Nor was it possible for him to appease their righteous indignation with the logic of cold figures. The English Exchequer was not equipped to furnish figures. Every department of government conducted its own finances in glorious independence. Orders were issued on the Treasury, and were paid when the money trickled in. Everyone concerned was long since dead before anyone, Charles included, knew that he never got the money he was supposed to be throwing away. The taxes which were estimated to yield £1,200,000 actually produced on the average a little less than £750,000, for fire, war and plague had severely cut into the customs, the principal source of revenue. The additional war taxes had been just as optimistically, and just as erroneously, calculated.

What actually happened would have startled Charles, if he had known it, as much as his people. He had not only been supporting himself entirely out of what was then regarded as his private estate, but he had been contributing besides to the expenses of government. Even the money he had wangled from Louis was being devoted to public works, chiefly to the navy.

For the first two years of his reign, Charles had lived at the rate of £200,000 a year. It was an enormous sum, but it covered a good deal of necessary expenses. It included the support of his entire household and that of James. Out of this fund he kept his palaces repaired, entertained ambassadors, bought food and clothing and works of art. With what was left over he kept his mistresses, supported his children, paid for his amusements. After the first two years he cut these expenses down. Never again did they exceed £150,000 a year. Yet by the sale of Crown lands, his wife's dowry, the proceeds of Dunkirk and the French subsidy he put more than that into the Exchequer.

In his own household accounts were kept more exactly than in the national Treasury. The King could always tell how much in arrears the salaries of his servants had fallen. It was often as much as five years and sometimes more. Hordes of petty officials around the palace — an apothecary at £11.2.6 a year; a birdkeeper at £30; a Yeoman of the Crossbows at £18.5; a rat killer at £12.3.4; a theatre keeper at £30, and so on by the hundred — waited with what patience they could for their pay. The King also knew to a penny what his clothes cost him, and among the state papers were such itemized lists as this of his Majesty's wardrobe for a year:

	£	s.	d.
Suits, cloaks and other apparel for the King's wear	1,415	11	6½
Indian gowns	198	8	6
Riding caps	35	19	9
Hats	101	18	
night caps	16	0	7½
shoes	126	7	
hose	173	9	
embroidery	53	4	4
vermilion waste coats	89	5	
sweet bags and slippers	17	16	11
periwigs	240		
belts	102	15	
spurs and buckles	22	8	
swords	39	5	
clasps, plate buttons, etc.	17	19	4
gloves	74	4	
perfumes	20	4	
point lace and other lace	88	14	10
silks, ribbons and more lace	92	14	6½

It all looked very methodical, but a maker of tennis nets waited twenty years for twenty pounds owed him " for work and wares delivered for his said Ma'tie's service into the Tennis Court."

The fortunes that were made at court were not given away by the King. They were the fruit of bribes, grants of monopolies, trading privileges and reprehensible practices which were not at the time incompatible with the highest official integrity. The industrious Pepys, who was unusual for honesty, loyalty and strict consideration of the good of the State, was accumulating a modest fortune by means which would earn ten years hard labour for the men who now admire him as the model of an efficient public servant.

During the war there had been much talk of cowardice, treachery and inefficiency. No doubt all of these existed, for it was a war, but the Dutch successes at the end were overwhelmingly due to a preponderance of wealth. The Netherlands spent twice as much as Charles, and they did it without straining their credit. When at the end Charles was borrowing money wherever he could get it and the wits were picturing him walking through the City hat in hand requesting small loans, he had to pay ten per cent. for what he could find. The Dutch could borrow any amount at two and a half, and the usual rate that bankers paid their depositors was six.

The disasters of the war years had struck England so low financially that two years after the fire, only eight hundred houses had been rebuilt in London. An undue proportion of them were ale-houses. Three years of peace so restored the country's trade that the people were flourishing; all the City except the churches was rebuilt and men were more prosperous than they had ever been before. Yet the Exchequer was entirely in the hands of the bankers and tax farmers. Both were regarded as necessary evils. The government could not collect taxes; obviously that was better done by private persons. So the farmers paid a flat sum and then proceeded to make a nice profit by wringing from the taxable source a good deal more than they had paid. After all it was a system that seemed to have worked very well in ancient Babylon.

The bankers, who were still goldsmiths and knew more about their craft than they did of modern finance, were the men to whom Charles had turned for ready cash. In the last two years his officials had devised a sort of paper money — the first in England — which would have been a valuable addition to the economy of the land if it had been backed by funds. Besides the handicap of being unsecured, its value as a circulating medium was hampered by the fact that it was issued only in large denominations, usually from £1,000 to £10,000, and so remained almost entirely in the hands of bankers.

Just after New Year, 1672, the inevitable crash occurred. Customers were pressing bankers for deposits. The bankers demanded their money of the government. Yet no official cared to risk the opprobrium of announcing national bankruptcy, a disgrace which Englishmen would rank only with the Dutch raid up the Thames. At this point Charles hit upon the delightfully modern expedient of a moratorium. It was called a " Stop of the Exchequer," which was simply an announcement that the government would honour the bankers' paper some other time. It was accompanied by writs restraining depositors from demanding their money of the bankers. Some courage was needed to issue these writs, but Charles found the brave man in Lord Ashley, created Earl of Shaftesbury and Lord Chancellor for the occasion. After a few years the bankers were compensated with annuities which covered both principal and interest.

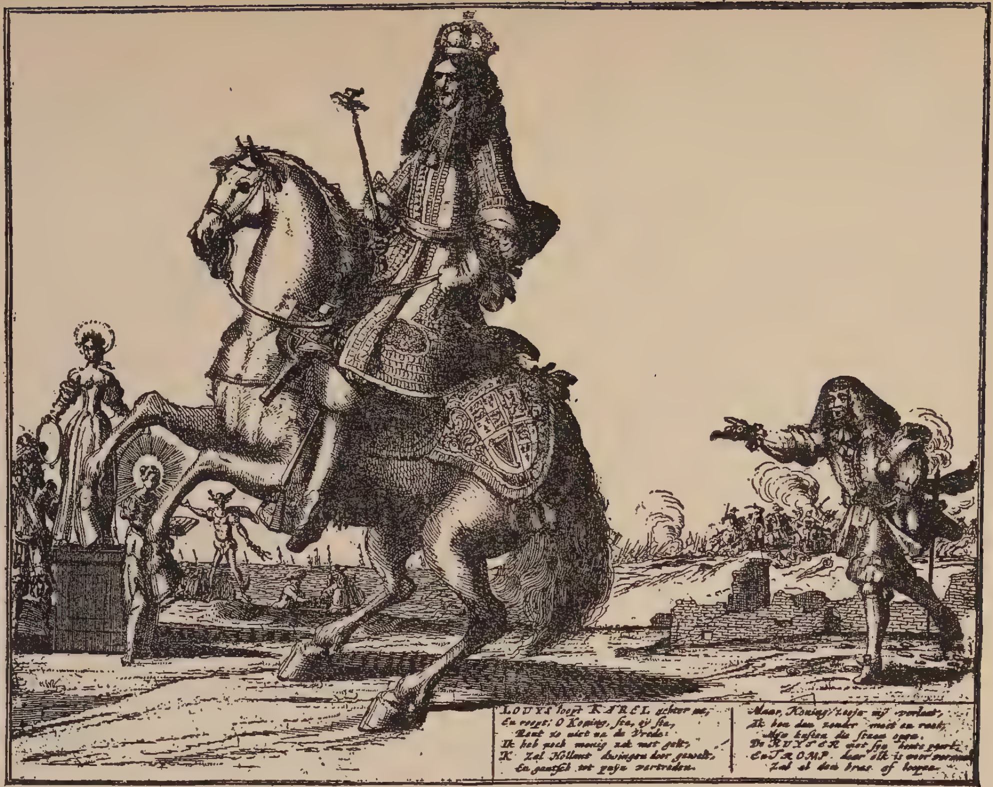
Meanwhile Charles, hardened to financial difficulties, embarked with Louis on their joint project for putting the Dutch in their place. This time the country was not enthusiastic, but the King had the forethought to give Parliament a long recess, so the opposition had no organized voice. There was, however, another difficulty, that of finding a good pretext for fighting. It would never do to declare baldly that England wanted to steal Dutch trade or that her king was secretly bound to help French aggression. First Charles grew belligerent about the asylum given in Holland to English rebels. The Dutch Ambassador explained that his country was a traditional refuge for such people, whereupon Charles reminded him that the States General had made no such claim when the Protectorate forced them to bar the Stuarts from Dutch Territory.

"Ha, sire!" exclaimed the envoy, "that was another matter. Cromwell was a great man and made himself feared on land and sea."

"I will make myself feared too in my turn," retorted Charles, but it was an empty boast.

In the end he found a war cry which he, with his exalted notions of royal importance, regarded as more justifiable than did a good many of his subjects. The last peace treaty had provided that Dutch ships should dip their flags to English vessels in recognition of Britannia's right to rule the waves. Now one of the royal yachts sailed through the Dutch fleet without receiving the salute, and Charles asserted that his honour was involved. War was accordingly declared, but as usual, hostilities began first. A number of rich Dutch merchantmen homeward bound from Smyrna, laden with the treasures of the Orient, were attacked, but escaped and the failure seemed to remove all excuse for this heinous breach of international law. After it was over even Englishmen condemned it.

While preparations for sending out a fleet were under way and Parliament was still adjourned, Charles decided to force his favourite project of religious tolerance upon his people. It was a nice point in constitutional law whether or not the King had the power to dispense with such laws as


LOUYS loopt KAREL achter na,
En roept; O Koning, sta, zy sta,
Rent zo niet na de Vrede:
Ik heb noch menig zak met geld,
K' Zal Hollant dwingen door geweld,
En gantsch tot payn vertreden.

The Two Kings, Charles and Louis, a Dutch View, 1672
"I will make myself feared too."

did not suit him, especially while Parliament was not in session. Charles, and a considerable body of respectable legal opinion, held that he could. Accordingly his Majesty issued a "Declaration of Indulgence" which carried out his promises at Breda by removing legal obstacles from the free exercise of religion and annulled some forty acts of Parliament. Nonconformists took speedy advantage of this mercy, "Papists and swarms of Sectaries now boldly showing themselves in their public meetings," Mr. Evelyn observed with horror. Good Churchmen were frightfully alarmed. They might have been willing to grant some toleration to Protestant dissenters, but the thought of Catholicism openly practised was more than they could bear. Nameless terrors, the people confidently believed, were sure to follow.

England was almost as much stirred by this question as by the year's naval battle, in which the Dutch proved a match for the French and English combined. It was a stubborn fight, for the Earl of Sandwich, who commanded for England under the Duke of York, had been stung out of his usual prudence by reflections upon his courage. His recklessness cost him his life and led to grumblings about the folly of war with a Protestant country.

The King who had started it, was not much concerned. He was attaining his object. The Dutch, obliged to bend every energy to repulsing French attacks by land, could not pay proper attention to their commerce, and English merchants were picking it up easily. Furthermore, the war was gratifying his paternal pride, for he sent Monmouth to command an English contingent which marched with the French army, and long, eulogistic reports of how splendidly the young Duke acquitted himself in battle were coming back to London.

* * *

The King found it a considerable problem by this time to provide for his offspring. He had fourteen — Nell Gwyn had two, Charles and James Beauclerk, and Louise presented him with a son, Charles Lennox, a couple of months after the naval battle. The older children were reaching an age when their future must be planned. Charles hit upon a general scheme for taking care of them. The boys, as they reached marriageable age, say from ten to fourteen, were made Dukes and betrothed to heiresses. The girls on attaining similar years were wedded to sprigs of the nobility who were then given a step up in the peerage.

Louise's son and Nell Gwyn's elder boy advanced a little more quickly than the others. The new mistress resented the prospect of the Duchess of Cleveland's second son, Henry Fitzroy, taking precedence of her little Charles, for Henry was to be created Duke of Grafton in honour of his betrothal to Arlington's daughter. Louise persuaded Charles to make her infant Duke of Richmond and then won a race with Barbara to have the patent sealed. She also emphasized her dignity as first mistress by securing for herself the title of Duchess of Portsmouth.

Nelly obtained the Dukedom of St. Albans for her son in characteristic fashion. She took to addressing him in the King's presence as " You little bastard " and when Charles objected that it did not sound well she replied innocently that she had nothing else to call him. His Majesty took the hint.

Such domestic interludes were welcome relief from the problems of Parliament, for after a year of war, he found it necessary to meet that body. He must have money for the navy, but instead of voting funds promptly so he could dismiss them again, they grew almost hysterical about the perils of Popery. They made appropriations contingent upon withdrawal of toleration from Catholics and Charles was not the man to sacrifice material good for the sake of abstract ideals which did not much affect him. In return for the war levies he cancelled the Declaration of Indulgence. That did not allay popular suspicions. The House of Commons saw in the army he was raising for Continental service a threat to their liberties, but they were even more concerned for their faith. As Bishop Burnet put it:

" They saw Popery and slavery lay at the bottom. Yet, that they might not grasp at too much at once, they resolved effectually to break the whole design of Popery."

The song, " Britons never, never, never shall be slaves," had not yet been written.

Keeping the major question always in mind, the House proceeded to pass a Test Act which drove every honest Catholic out of the public service. All officials, civil, military, naval or clerical were required to take an oath and sign a declaration against Transubstantiation, which Papists would not do. Charles, willing to yield in religious matters if he could have his way in temporal affairs, signed the bill and all England watched with eager interest to see who would retire into private life.

Clifford, Lord Treasurer of England, laid down his staff of office. The Duchess of Cleveland gave up her place with the Queen. She had been converted in spite of family opposition which had taken the form of appeals to Charles, who, the French Ambassador reported, " answered that as for the soul of the ladies, he did not meddle with that." Barbara's successor remained in office. The Test Act permitted the Queen to keep nine Catholic attendants, and her ladies drew lots. But when eight had been chosen, Catherine stopped the lottery. Out of her love for the King she announced that the ninth place would be given to Louise de Queroualle.

Greatest popular interest was centered upon the Duke of York, who had been suspected of Popery for some time. His wife, who had wielded enormous influence over his slow mind, had died a Catholic, to her exiled father's great grief. For two years James had refrained from taking communion according to the rites of the Church of England. Even between the passing of the Act and the day set for taking the Test, he absented himself from Church ceremonies which Charles attended. At last the day came and to the consternation of all high-minded Protestants, the heir to the throne resigned all his offices and commands rather than deny that he was a Catholic.

Twenty-four

JAMES had a genius for doing unpopular things in the most unpopular manner and at the most inopportune moment. The country's dismay at his announced change of religion was still fresh when he aggravated it by getting married again. This time it was a courtship after the royal manner, with proper polite negotiations, but the bride was a Catholic. She was an Italian princess, Mary of Modena, a beautiful child of fifteen. The Duke of York was forty, but good-looking and still wearing gracefully the reputation which his naval and military successes had given him.

Charles approved the match for it was not likely to disturb the international scheme of things, and the marriage was performed by proxy. The King was greatly displeased when Protestant leaders in the House of Commons, making an impudent incursion into domains which were none of their business, began to debate the perils of the Duke's choice. Charles prorogued them for six days to teach them their place, but the lesson was lost upon them. They returned to the discussion where they had left off. They paid no attention to suggestions that they consider the war. Charles told them plainly he was no Pope to annul a marriage and anyway Princes of the Blood had some rights, among them the privilege of marrying whom they pleased, like anybody else. The House's reply was to propose resolutions against further taxes and against "Popish councillors." Another prorogation left them in an even more unreasonable frame of mind. All the talk was of religion and the need for a day of humiliation and prayer to save the Church of England.

Charles had experienced more than enough of that sort of thing in Scotland when he could not help himself. He did not propose to go through it again. He prorogued Parliament a third time and settled down to govern the country without the aid of such an inconvenient debating society. His first act was to dismiss Shaftesbury, who had allied himself with the Protestant party and led it in the House of Lords. Then he proceeded to do away with the need for extra taxes by making peace.

On the whole he was not sorry to do so. He had largely achieved his purpose in the war. Dutch trade had received a blow from which it never recovered, although the loss was due much more to French power than to English. Anyway without Parliamentary aid it was folly to continue the war. Louis had given his cousin a subsidy of about £600,000 — the one case in history in which England received such financial aid from an ally instead of giving it — in addition to the regular pension of £125,000. But that was not enough to keep the navy at fighting strength, so Charles blithely violated the spirit of his secret treaty with France and concluded a separate peace with the Dutch. He left Louis alone against all Europe, but it was a fairly equal struggle in which, as Charles soon remarked with some complacence, everyone was losing except England. The neutral was quietly annexing the trade of the belligerents. The prosperous results were visible almost from the moment of the Stop of the Exchequer, a coincidence which was all any politician needed to justify a given policy.

The country was so well to do that for the first time in his reign the King received not only the £1,200,000 originally voted him but even a little more. The English merchant marine doubled in these years, and as most of the revenues came from the customs the government profited in proportion. Charles was actually solvent and even began paying some of his debts, thanks to the efficiency of his new Lord Treasurer, Sir Thomas Osborne, soon created Earl of Danby. This very able minister had been introduced at court by Buckingham, but now quite eclipsed his patron in power. He was a sincere believer in royal rather than Parliamentary rule, and while careful to see that his own fortune was derived from the profits of his office, he was so conscientious in suppressing the peculations and waste of others that he materially reduced the cost of administration. He could never be entirely useful as principal minister, however, because he was an enemy of religious toleration and of France.

At the moment that last was not so important. Louis quite naturally stopped his cousin's pension when Charles made peace, although two years later he renewed it at £100,000 a year in a treaty reluctantly negotiated at his King's insistence by Danby.

To all these political and financial flurries Charles gave his customary casual but effective heed. He was more than usually in earnest, however, because he was intimately, personally affected to an abnormal degree. Politics were being complicated by agitation that he obtain a divorce and remarry in order to secure the nation against the succession of the Catholic James. Moll Davis had recently borne the King his fifteenth — and last — acknowledged child, Mary Tudor, who became Countess of Derwentwater. Men of all ranks and shades of Protestantism were crying out that it was his duty to have legitimate offspring.

The point was not new but it had never been so strongly urged. At one time James had been alarmed, and his enemies cheered, by the belief that his Majesty was actually in favour of it himself. This was even before the Duke had made himself so unpopular. The hope had originated in a suit for divorce, brought before Parliament by Lord Roos. His wife had long been living apart from him and in a manner that he considered dishonoured him. She had recently given birth to a child, appropriately named Ignoto. His lordship had plenty of grounds but, save for the rather unsavory precedents of Henry VIII, there had never been a divorce in England.

The Roos case was interesting enough in itself, but it became all-absorbing when its larger implications were considered, as they soon were by all men in public life. No one doubted that the King would regard himself as free to follow any precedent Parliament might set in this instance. Charles himself struck dismay into the hearts of his brother's friends by becoming an ardent advocate of divorce. No one believed him when he insisted he was not a bit concerned on his own account.

After days of debate the House of Lords passed the bill, which stipulated that the husband should have the right to marry again, and Charles gave his royal assent. The party which wished to see a new Queen was so elated that at least one member of it made a tour of Europe looking for a suitable Princess. But to their disappointment such men discovered that for once the King had meant just exactly what he said. He would not hear of using the new precedent for himself. He preferred killing a woman to divorcing her, he said, because it would be much less trouble, but he did not propose to permit himself to be bullied into what he considered an act of injustice which could do him no good.

Now, several years later, with James a declared Catholic and married to a Catholic, the popular demand was stronger than ever. Buckingham even proposed to kidnap Catherine and send her to some remote plantation in the New World. Then, he argued, Charles would have desertion to add to barrenness as grounds for divorce. The King rejected this plan even more indignantly than he did most of the others, declaring he would never part with anyone who loved him and who had never offended him. Nor was it compatible even with his conscience to blame her for her inability to produce an heir to the throne.

It is not probable that a divorce would have given England the Prince of Wales for which she so yearned. Although Charles was only forty-four he begot no more children, certainly none that he acknowledged. He had contracted a venereal disease, a malady which few men and not very many women of his day escaped, and although he quickly recovered there were no more additions to his brood, which had grown so large that when a loyal speechmaker addressed his Majesty as " the father of his people," Rochester muttered, " Of most of them."

There was no secret about the King's ailment; there was never any reticence displayed about his personal concerns. The whole court had heard Louise railing at him because she said she caught syphilis from him, and the court rejoiced most indecently that the hated mistress was very ill for a long time. They hoped great things from her enforced absence from public functions. She had been created Duchess of Portsmouth, and fearful men took it as a mark of her complete ascendancy over her lover. They planned to undermine this supposed influence by giving Charles new, Protestant mistresses. Hatred of the Frenchwoman had become so great that one day a mob stormed around a handsome coach which they thought contained her and threatened violence. They were working themselves up to it by shouting obscene abuse when the occupant revealed herself.

" Pray, good people, be civil," said Nell Gwyn. " I am the Protestant whore."

But Nelly, dear as she was to the populace, indispensable as she was to Charles, could not be the Protestant champion. She would not play the game of politics. So less intelligent beauties had to be enlisted. Scheming mothers sent their pretty daughters to court in the hope that the King would be attracted. Ambitious courtiers intrigued for their young cousins. But though Charles never rejected beauty, he was never sufficiently bewitched to suit the amorous conspirators. He was not the slave to passion that most of them thought him. The Earl of Mulgrave, who knew him well and understood him better than most, realized this when he wrote:

" He was rather abandoned than luxurious and, like our female libertines, apter to be persuaded to debauches for the satisfaction of others than to seek, with choice, where most to please himself. I am of opinion also that in his latter times there was as much of laziness as of love in all those hours he passed amoung his mistresses, who after all only served to fill up his Seraglio, while a bewitching kind of pleasure called sauntering and talking without any constraint was the true Sultana Queen he delighted in."

There was, for example, the case of Mary Lawson. She was a beautiful young woman, and dutiful too. Her family, well descended but by no means wealthy rural gentry, took her up to Whitehall to be seduced by the King and make their fortunes. For a few months Mrs. Lawson was the belle of London. She accomplished her mission, but she won only a comfortable pension of which payment was very uncertain. There were no titles, no palaces, no splendid gifts from native noblemen and foreign ambassadors, no fees from eager jobhunters. Her brief, uneventful reign ended, the girl returned with her disappointed mother to the obscurity of their home.

Charles did not pine for her. He played his tennis, rode his horses at Newmarket, danced, laughed, jested with the wits and went to the play. The theatre was booming. A handsome young man named William Wycherly, kept by the Duchess of Cleveland and patronized by the King, was giving Restoration audiences the sort of broad, humorous, cheerfully amorous theatrical fare they so much admired. Dryden, Etheredge, Sedley, even the versatile Buckingham with a splendid satire called " The Rehearsal " were writing for the stage.

There was actually a woman playwright, " the ingenious Mrs. Behn," " the incomparable Aphra," as the broad-minded called her. She was a most prolific writer and some of her plays were much applauded by those who were tolerant of such innovations as female authors working for a living. The takings of every third night at the theatre went to the author, so that three performances constituted a success. Several of Aphra Behn's plays had longer runs and occasional revivals, but not all men would accept with equanimity the horrid prospect of women competing with their natural masters in the sacred domains of professional art. The author herself, describing the fate of

" The Dutch Lover," one of her early and most popular plays, wrote:

" That day 'twas acted first there comes me into the pit a long, lither, phlegmatic, white, ill-favoured, wretched fop, an officer in masquerade newly transported with a scarf and feather out of France, a sorry animal that has naught else to shield it from the uttermost contempt of all mankind but that respect which we afford to rats and toads — this thing, I tell ye, opening that which serves it for a mouth, out issued such a noise as this to those that sat about it: that they were to expect a woeful play, God damn him, for it was a woman's."

In the face of such modernity as was typified in Aphra Behn, a more ancient form of dramatic entertainment than she produced was dying. The historical masque, solely devoted to magnificent pageantry of costume and setting, had to yield to comedy. But it died hard, and although the masque, " Calisto or the Chaste Nymph," which was given during the Christmas festivities of 1674, was one of the last in England, it was one of the most elaborate. It was the most picturesque bit of a series of festivities which Charles produced continuously at Whitehall from the eighth of December to the twelfth of January. The expense was enormous, but in his new-found prosperity, with revenues actually exceeding estimates, a King could afford to be extravagant. The masque alone cost a pretty penny. All the ladies of court had parts in the pageant, and the least ornately garbed of them, those who represented the winds, wore twenty yards of cloth while others were gracefully swathed in as much as sixty yards. The lady who played the title role in the production was decked with £20,000 worth of gems, and in the press of admiring courtiers she lost a jewel which the Duke of York gallantly made good.

◆

Charles was not alone in giving lavish entertainments. The nobility followed suit, and often exceeded their King in reckless expenditure; the foreign ambassadors lived well up to their means; even citizens of London could do things in the grand manner on occasion. The merchants were becoming richer than the landed proprietors, and some of them yielded to no aristocrat in spending prowess. To honour their sovereign when in 1674 they conferred the freedom of the City upon him, they prepared a banquet and gala performance which led Andrew Marvel to cry out upon " ye addle-brained cits." It was so convivial a gathering that it proved too much even for Charles. With all the dignitaries of London reeling around him, he tried to slip away, but the Lord Mayor, Sir Robert Vyner, staggered after him and insisted he come back for just one more bottle. The intoxicated citizen would not take no for an answer from his sovereign, and Charles yielded with his usual good humour. They returned together to the hall, his Majesty merrily humming a popular song of the day, " And the man that is drunk is as great as a King."

With the country quiet under his sway, his ministers such as he could use, his income adequate to his needs for the moment, there was only one cloud in the political heavens. Shaftesbury and other men who posed as champions of popular liberties were carefully nurturing a growing alarm about Popery. Charles watched the fears of his subjects rising, but he was too lazy, too bored by theology, to calm them.

He got through the Parliamentary session of 1675 without much trouble, although there were plentiful symptoms of discontent. He met the Houses with a speech in which he tried to explain to them how ridiculous their apprehensions were. A few days later every member of the Commons had a copy of a parody which imitated perfectly the King's confidential, easy manner of address on state occasions.

"My Lords and Gentlemen," it ran, "I told you at our last meeting that the winter was the fittest time for business, and in truth I thought it so till my Lord Treasurer assured me that ye Spring is ye fittest time for salads and subsidies. I hope therefore this April will not prove so unnatural as not to afford plenty of both; some of you may perhaps think it dangerous to make me too rich, but do not fear it, I promise you faithfully (whatever you give) I will take care to want; and yet in that you may rely on me, I will never break it although in other things my word may be thought a slender authority. My Lords and Gentlemen, I can bear my own straights with patience, but My Lord Treasurer doth protest that the revenue as it now stands is too little for us both; one of us must pinch for it, if you do not help us out. I must speak freely to you, I am under incumbrances; for besides my whores in service, my reformado ones lie hard upon me. I have a pretty good estate, I must confess, but Odd's fish, I have a charge on't. Here is my Lord Treasurer can tell you that all the moneys designed for the Summer's Guards must of necessity be applied for next year's cradles and swaddling clothes; what then shall we do for ships? I only hint that to you; that's your business, not mine. I know by experience I can live without them; I lived twenty years abroad without ships and was never in better health in my life, but how well you can live without them you had best try. I leave it to yourselves to judge, and therefore only mention it; I do not intend to insist upon that. . . .

"If you desire more instances of my zeal I have them for you; for example, I have converted all my natural sons from popery, (and I may say without vanity) it was more my work and much more peculiar to me than the getting of them. It would do your hearts good to hear how prettily little George can read already the Psalter; they are all fine children, God bless 'em, and so like me in their understandings. . . .

"My Lords and Gentlemen, I would have you believe of me as you always found me; and I do solemnly profess that, whatever you give me, it shall be managed with the same thrift, trust, conduct and prudence and sincerity that I have ever practised since my happy restoration."

Everyone enjoyed it; Charles himself laughed rather more loudly than most men, but Parliament soon passed from pleasantry to encroachments on the royal prerogative. They presumed to offer suggestions as to how the country should be governed. They wanted the King to persecute Catholics and they wanted him to make war on France. They wasted months in trying to force him to give them a voice in such questions, but they spent even more time in an acrimonious but trifling quarrel between Lords and Commons over the extent of a peer's privileges and immunities. Charles finally wearied of this talk and the prospect of worse disputes if they ever finished this one. He prorogued his loyal advisers for fifteen months, the longest recess he had yet given them.

With that nuisance abated, he returned to his old policy of friendship with France. Louis had been appeased by promise of a free hand against the Dutch so long as they were not completely deprived of their independence. Charles did not share the nation's sudden enthusiasm for these people. He had learned that his nephew, the Prince of Orange, had been intriguing with the popular party in England for support in the wars. The young man's doings were rather obscure, but his motives were obvious. He was a Protestant champion and, after the Duke of York and his children, heir to the throne of England. He was now fighting for his own country's life against France.

The negotiations to have Louis restore his English cousin's pension were complicated by the sort of feminine distractions which were no novelty to either of the contracting parties. The centre of the tangle was a lady Charles had wooed in vain more than fifteen years before, the youngest of " Les Mazarinettes," Hortense Mancini, now twenty-nine years old and acclaimed from Italy to England as the most beautiful woman in Europe. Married young to a religious fanatic who took the title of Duc de Mazarin and dissipated, ascetically but thoroughly, the enormous fortune his wife had received from her uncle, the Cardinal, she at last ran away. It was very daring, although the world knew that she had suffered years of being bullied, lectured and forced to absurd penances. Her flight became the prime gossip in all the capitals of Europe, and Charles at the time had written of her:

" She has exceeded my Ldy. Shrewsbery in point of discresion by robbing her husband. I see wives do not love devoute husbands, which reason this woman had besides many more, as I heare, to be rid of her husband upon any tearmes, and so I wish her a good iourney."

She escaped to Italy where one of her sisters lived, but cut such a wide swath among the chivalrous sentimentalists of the peninsula that other women's jealousies forced her to leave. Once again she became the talk of all fashionable societies by riding across Europe in a cavalier's costume and taking ship for England where the Duchess of Portsmouth's enemies had assured her a generous reception. She landed quite penniless, but with infinite resources. She was much more than clever. She was tactful, kind, gracious to her inferiors, a sincere and discriminating scholar and the possessor of infinite calm. To her qualities of mind and manner she added a beauty which the learned French exile, Saint Evremond, extolled in verse and prose for years. She was, he said, of the old classical type of perfection, " no way like our baby-visaged and puppet-like faces of France."

" And if," he added, " we may judge by what we see of what we do not see, we may certainly conclude that her husband after having been the happiest man is now the unhappiest in the world."

This brilliant woman came to London ostensibly to visit her cousin, James's new wife, and for some time she lived quietly, almost retired from all society. But so eagerly had she been awaited by those who wished through her to undermine Louise's position that even before Charles had seen the lady, the broadsides were gleefully reporting her as his latest mistress.

" And who will blame his Ma^{tie}," one of the scribblers added sympathetically, " to take his pennyworth if hee can out of so fine a creature, and a dutchesse already to his hand, no small convenience."

The gossips were a little premature, but Charles soon caught up with them. The French Ambassador, observing with some concern the progress of an amour which might harm his master's interests, thought that public opinion as much as his own inclinations had caused the King to take as his mistress the woman he had been denied as a wife. This envoy and the equally astute diplomat who soon succeeded him followed the course of the affair with an alarm which they communicated to their superiors. Hortense was not very friendly towards Louis. The French King had repeatedly rejected her petitions that the Duc de Mazarin be forced to return part of the fortune she had brought him.

* * *

The Ambassadors warned him that she might turn Charles from his French alliance, and they urged that some sort of financial settlement be made with the Duchesse. Charles joined them in their plea and with his own hand wrote his cousin on her behalf. Louis, who shared the belief that in politics Charles was ruled by women, tried to persuade the obdurate husband, but his conscience would not permit him to use force in such a case. At last Charles was obliged to provide for her himself, and it was a significant point, strangely overlooked in the gossip of the day, that Hortense's pension was the same as that granted Nelly, £4,000 a year.

Meanwhile the Duchess of Portsmouth who had been nursing ill health at Bath, returned to Whitehall. She was obviously jealous of the newcomer, to the great joy of all beholders. They were pleased that the King never saw Louise now in public, although he called politely at her rooms to ask after her every day. More often he was with Hortense, who spent much time visiting the King's daughter, Anne, recently married to the Earl of Sussex and installed in apartments which communicated through a private staircase with those of her father. One Ambassador reported that Charles " prefers talking to her rather than to anyone else " and was always with her except when he went up the river for a swim.

" The ladies do not go with the men," the diplomat explained. " It is the only decency which they observe in this country."

Men also noticed that Charles was frequently absent on mysterious nocturnal excursions from which he usually returned about three o'clock in the morning, but the Ambassador thought he knew where his Majesty had been. Certainly he spent many evenings publicly at the house which

Hortense had taken in St. James's Park. He was there in the centre of the most cultivated society in England. Gambling, of which Charles disapproved but which he never tried to check, was on a moderate scale, far different from the feverish gaming at Whitehall. There were scholarly and literary debates in which the hostess took a prominent and intelligent part. There were famous contests of wits. Both the food and the conversation were the best in England. At one of these gatherings Saint Evremond, so happy he passed beyond joy to sadness, declaimed an ante-mortem funeral oration.

"Weep, Gentlemen!" he cried, "and not tarrying to bewail a beauty until she is lost, afford your tears to the melancholy consideration that we must one day lose her. Weep! Weep! Whoever expects a certain and unavoidable misfortune may already style himself unfortunate. Hortensia will die; that Miracle of the World will one day die; the idea of so great a calamity deserves your tears."

Important as she was in the social life of the country, much as Charles liked her company, her person and her conversation, the hopes she had raised among Louise's opponents soon died. The new mistress was much too intelligent to take any interest in politics she did not understand. She knew her lover had not lost his head over her sufficiently to make it worth her while to learn. She might have played the Duchess of Portsmouth's game of selling influence she did not possess, but Hortense was too easy-going to profit by such a brand of carefully planned deception. The King's nightly visits to her became more infrequent; Louise was once more supreme in his affections, and the French Ambassador's despatches assumed a calmer tone.

Charles had entered middle age most gracefully, his gray hair concealed from the public under the curls of his periwig, his face but slightly more lined than it had been in youth. He was still graceful, still active. The only change in his appearance as he grew older was a deepening of the folds which gave his features their harsh expression. Catherine grew stout and plainer than ever; Barbara lost her beauty; Frances Stuart had become only the Queen's companion; the rakes of Whitehall, even Rochester, who was under thirty, were losing their figures or their teeth or their dispositions and were replaced by younger men. The King alone held the pace.

However, the French Ambassador soon had something he considered more important than mistresses to write about.

The serenity of his Majesty's private life was no longer matched by peace in public affairs. As he watched a thirst for power rising again among the obstinate gentry, Charles knew that he must prepare for the great battle of his life, a fight to show these men once and for all who really ruled in England.

Twenty-five

BATTLE was joined in good earnest when Parliament met — the usual signal for a fight, Charles reflected wearily. After their fifteen months' vacation, the sturdy exponents of representative government were brimming over with a list of their grievances, which they presented so bluntly that Charles disciplined them with a few days' prorogation almost before they began the session.

They were by no means sure of their own strength. They had in mind nothing less than a constitutional revolution, and they were afraid that in this Parliament, elected nearly seventeen years before, there were enough unquestioning friends of the monarchy to defeat any measures that would seriously impair the King's power. Some of these members were bought, but many of them were sincere in their support of royalty. They saw in the conduct of their colleagues an excellent argument against Parliamentary supremacy.

Bribery had become so consistently the rule of legislative procedure that the greedy group at Westminster had for years been called " the Pensionary Parliament." Every foreign government furnished its envoys in London with corruption funds, which were freely used in the House of Commons. Save in matters affecting religion, a majority might be bought for any measure. Charles could very easily have purchased harmony and power if he had been rich enough to bid successfully against the wealthy leaders of the opposition, against Louis, against other Continental nations. Members were quite shameless.

"You were not against me today," said the King to one of his new converts.

"No, Sir," replied the well-paid gentleman, "I was against my conscience today."

Some of these legislators were so skillful that they took bribes from Charles, Spain, France and Holland all at the same time. They had, perhaps, learned the way of it from their sovereign, but they had not mastered his other trick of doing it without sacrificing his own or his country's essential interests. Most of the Commons cared for nothing but their own fortunes. Sincere monarchists were consequently confirmed in their belief that popular rule was a synonym for anarchy. They had not forgotten the impotence of the Long Parliament during the Commonwealth.

The leader of the anarchists, however, was a man of resource and ingenuity. The Earl of Shaftesbury, philosophically inclined towards republicanism and definitely committed to a revolutionary program which might bring him supreme power, evolved a plan for forcing new elections. In the present excitedly Protestant state of the nation, his party would be sure to win an overwhelming majority. He boldly argued that a prorogation of more than a year was tantamount to a dissolution. He offered the argument in the House of Lords, and the political war began.

Charles knew very well the strength of the man with whom he had to deal. In that he had the advantage of Shaftesbury, who consistently minimized his sovereign's talents and never gave him credit for sufficient determination to struggle against odds for the sake of mere principle.

On the other hand, the King paid his opponent the compliment of fearing him more than he did the whole mass of popular prejudice which Shaftesbury had fostered.

When the Earl was in office, Charles had admired his ability, mistrusted his loyalty and valued his pleasant companionship. As a younger man, Shaftesbury had shared the dissipations of the fashionable world, held his own with the wits and made an envied name for himself among the rakes at Whitehall.

" I believe thou art the wickedest dog in England, my lord," Charles once rallied him, but Shaftesbury was as quick of tongue as the King.

" May it please your Majesty," he retorted, " of a subject, I believe I am."

Now at fifty-five the fires of his dissolute youth had burned down to a glow of political ambition. Ill health had transformed his good looks to the restless leanness of which Caesar disapproved. He was entirely single-minded in the pursuit of his political aims, but he moved towards them by such devious ways and with such hypocritically pure speeches that Charles dubbed him " Little Sincerity." Now he was bent upon making Parliament supreme in the land. He was confident he would be supreme in Parliament.

He opened his attack with a grave error, for which his disparagement of the King's courage was responsible. Charles, far from yielding to the determined language of the opposition, took advantage of the overbold move to win a victory that would have crushed anyone less persevering or less able than Shaftesbury. The argument that a year's recess automatically dissolved a Parliament was patently moonshine. Charles, alarmed by the suggestion of an illegality which might very easily pass into precedent, declared the proposers had questioned the sacred authority of the Parliament of which they were members. He displayed his horror of such an insult by sending the Earl and his colleagues to the Tower.

They aggravated the case by appealing to the courts for relief. The Lords were jealous of their position as the highest tribunal in the land, and they were indignant that anyone entitled to their justice should dare to appeal to a lower court. So for a year Shaftesbury, along with Buckingham, who had eagerly enlisted in the movement, remained in the Tower. It was not an onerous confinement. State prisoners with means could buy comfortable lodgings, the food and wine to which they were accustomed and the privilege of receiving their friends. Shaftesbury even asked to have his meals prepared by his own cook, a plain hint that he feared poison.

" You see, my lords, what a good opinion he has of me," Charles protested to some of the prisoner's peers.

During the respite he had thus won, the King worked hard to establish such a strong position that he would be immune to further attacks. He played a double game, seeking first to hold the power he demanded by the consent of his subjects, but reserving France to support him if his own people remained stubborn. To insure success he promised himself to both the Protestant and Catholic interests.

He was willing to conciliate the Protestants if they did not demand the sacrifices of royal authority or his brother's rights. In dealing with them, harmony with power was his aim. To prove his attachment to the national religion, he married James's elder daughter, the next successor to the throne, to her cousin, the Protestant champion, William of Orange. The girl and her father objected violently. Mary, a good-looking merry girl of fifteen was repelled by the ugly, frail, unnaturally serious young man whose manners were atrocious even if he was a hero. James complained that it was very hard that his own child should be torn from him to be married to an infidel, although the girl was as good a Protestant as William.

However, Charles insisted, and the Prince of Orange came over to fetch his bride. He was ostentatiously fêted by Shaftesbury's faction and the City of London, for he was upholding the cause of religion and liberty against the onslaughts of the absolutist Louis. At Whitehall he was not so popular. He tried to join in the gayety of the place, and only succeeded in getting very riotously drunk. In that condition he made a determined effort to break into the bedrooms of the Maids of Honour. He was forcibly restrained, for it was one of the rules of the game at Whitehall that a lady's permission must be asked, but a sympathetic chronicler remarked:

"His mistress, I suppose, did not like him the worse for such a notable indication of his vigour."

Charles was willing to make what appeared to be an even more decisive gesture than this marriage for the cause of religion. When Parliament met early in 1678 he agreed to make war on France if he could be furnished with adequate supplies. Shaftesbury, released from his confinement after a due apology to the Lords, was back in his place to take part in the debates. A resolution approving war was passed, and the King proved his sincerity by gathering an army to assist the Dutch.

All this time he had been telling Louis that he really intended nothing but the deception of his people. He was so convincing that, through the still reluctant Danby, he persuaded the French King to increase his pension to £300,000 a year. That was to be his reserve weapon in case Parliament refused his proposals for securing their religion without infringement upon royal prerogative. He managed to pacify Louis until he actually had thirty thousand men under arms, and then he was so sure of Parliamentary support that he did not disguise his intentions.

The French King naturally was furious. He organized a counter stroke which in combination with the obstinate suspicion of some Englishman and the venal duplicity of others, a duplicity equal to Charles' own, quite confounded the royal policy. " Little Sincerity " and the leaders of his faction, far more interested in power than in the security of religion, which they were using only as a convenient slogan, followed their King's example by accepting bribes from Louis. They succeeded in working so well upon their more stupid followers that doubt as to the King's motives revived. It was whispered the new army would be used to establish Catholicism. Parliament, partly bought by France and partly swayed by bigotry, blithely refused to promise money for the troops. It was a conscienceless disregard of plighted faith worthy of their sovereign. Charles was obliged to disband the men and pay them out of his own pocket, an expense which forced him to go on asking Parliament for money. Shaftesbury had won a trick in the game quite as valuable as the one he lost when he was sent to the Tower.

Attacks upon the royal prerogative were pushed hard. The Commons showed their revolutionary spirit by demanding control over declarations of war, formation of alliances, negotiation of peace treaties. The impudence of such a proposed breach of the Constitution, the most radical that had been suggested since Cromwell, aroused in Charles only contempt. He had already expressed his opinion of the people's representatives when, tossing his handkerchief into the air, he cried:

" I care just that for Parliament."

Now, with the outrageous demand before him, he summoned the Commons to the throne and read them a severe lecture.

" Could I have been silent I would rather have chosen to do so than to call to mind things so unfit for you to meddle with as are contained in some parts of your last addresses," he said. " Should I suffer this fundamental power of making peace and war to be so far invaded (though but once) as to have the manner and circumstances of leagues prescribed to me by Parliament, it's plain that no Prince of State would any longer believe that the sovereignty of England rests in the Crown, nor could I think myself to signify any more to foreign princes than the empty sound of King. Wherefore you may rest assured that no condition shall make me depart from or lessen so essential a part of the monarchy."

He thereupon emphasized the royal authority by telling the Commons they stood adjourned, although the usual procedure was to order them to adjourn themselves. But when they came back, in response to an urgent need for money, they were just as impertinent. Shaftesbury introduced a resolution requesting the King to dismiss James from his councils and followed it up with a bill to exclude the Duke of York from the throne because he was a Catholic. Louis, still angry at having been made a dupe, betrayed Danby to his enemies and the whole correspondence leading up to the latest pension agreement was read to the Commons. At the bottom of each of the Treasurer's letters was scrawled in the King's own hand: " This letter is writ by my order. C.R." but that line was suppressed by the Speaker. Charles informed the House he had directed all the negotiations, but the impeachment was ordered anyway and Danby saw himself becoming the victim of a policy he had condemned.

At this juncture Titus Oates arrived in London, quite unnoticed, with a scheme for capitalizing the nation's fears in a big way. He had hitherto lived precariously by petty swindles, but now he was ready to go after important money. He had originally been driven from the Church of England for repeated perjuries and sins of the flesh. Thereupon he had gone to France and entered a Jesuit monastery as a convert. The Jesuits soon expelled him for the same practices that had led to his misfortune in England and he had conceived a great hatred of them for refusing to support him in the blessed idleness and profligacy which English Protestants supposed was the lot of all priests.

Now he was back in England turning over in his mind a fantastic, utterly imaginary tale of Catholic iniquity and plots to ruin the British nation. He tried it out on a fanatical hater of Popery, Israel Tonge, who would believe any villainy of a Catholic. Tonge agreed that since there was no evidence of the horrid conspiracy save Oates' mere word, it was their patriotic duty to manufacture it. Together they drew up documents designed to reveal a scheme to kill the King, massacre Protestants, put James on the throne and submit the country to the Pope's pleasure.

Oates had the completed version carried to the King. Charles knew it for what it was, but he ordered the author brought before the Privy Council for examination. His Majesty was far too accomplished a liar to be taken in by such a crude practitioner as Oates. He heard the wild yarn with amusement, pointed out a few monstrous discrepancies and asked a few searching qestions. He showed that Oates could never have seen the men he claimed hired him, for he was far wrong in his descriptions of them. Then the informer told of attending a meeting of conspirators in a Jesuit college next the Louvre.

"Man," exclaimed Charles, who knew his Paris, "the Jesuits have not a college within a mile of the Louvre!"

Completely contemptuous of the testimony, he left for the Newmarket races, ordering Danby to deal with the fellow as his perjury deserved. But Danby, thankful for anything that might divert attention from his own case, did nothing and Oates soon found more sympathetic listeners than the King. One of them was Shaftesbury, and by the time Charles returned to the capital, the great Popish Plot had fastened upon England with an inexorable grip.

Oates had gone before a justice of the peace, Sir Edmundbury Godfrey, to swear to the truth of his story and to the House of Commons to warn them of their danger. The staunch guardians of the liberties of England, inflamed by years of fearful startings at the very mention of Popery, swallowed every lie Oates served up and begged for more, which he obligingly supplied as fast as he could think of them. The horrors of the man hunt swept over the country as every fanatic fool and scoundrel ran to the authorities to denounce his neighbours. Anyone who presumed to doubt anything the chief informer might say was under grave suspicion. If Oates heard about it, the suspicion was promptly turned to denunciation.

Two incidents combined to lend a semblance of truth to the fiction. The credulous were more than ever convinced by them and they were cunningly used by "Little Sincerity," who believed in the plot no more than Charles did. The first was the mysterious death of Godfrey, whether by suicide or murder no one stopped to inquire although later there was a strong body of opinion inclining to the theory of suicide. But at the time his death was attributed without hesitation to Papists. Great numbers of Catholics were rounded up and accused of the crime, and a good many were executed for it.

The other bit of luck for Oates was that among the papers of a man he denounced were found some letters in which the writer expressed hopes that England would soon be brought back to the true faith. The author was Coleman, secretary to the Duchess of York, and he was promptly beheaded along with dozens of equally innocent men.

Oates of course had his imitators, and some of them were as ready liars as he was. They were needed because in capital cases two witnesses were required against the accused. A little group of professional perjurers was soon formed to swear away the lives of Catholics. The rewards of the trade were considerable in the eyes of men to whom a thousand pounds was a fortune that would keep them in comfort for life. The fee for betraying a priest was set at twenty pounds, while a layman brought only ten. The more unscrupulous successful rascals were given pensions and allowances, and were acclaimed by a blood mad, piously frenzied populace as the saviours of their country.

No one was safe from them unless he joined them. Charles was quite powerless to check the panic of slaughter. He could only give passes to those who wished to flee the country. His impotence made him furious, and for the first time in his life those about him were startled by the signs of a rage which he could not control. When he spoke of the villains who were fighting him — for he never doubted the political basis of the plot — he was pale with fury and he trembled with angry helplessness. But he could make his rage impressive and when the informers went to the length of accusing the Queen of conspiring to poison him, his demeanour was so fierce that even Oates did not dare go further, although the people continued to whisper that Catherine was not to be trusted.

The King's Catholic mistresses had an easier escape than his wife. The Duchesse de Mazarin was not in politics. She was only cursed a little and accused vaguely. The Duchess of Portsmouth won immunity by promising her support to "Little Sincerity." The Duchess of Cleveland was safe in France, distinguishing herself by a jealous quarrel with her daughter over a man. Charles, when he took a hand in the dispute, received this reply:

"Now all I have to say for myself is that you know as to love one is not mistress of one's self & that you ought not to be offended wth me, since all things of y^{s} nature is at an end wth you and I, so that I could do you no prejudice."

Her former lover took less notice of her than he might if he had not been so preoccupied with events at home. As the reign of terror wore on, he regained his calm. He grew accustomed to the brutally farcical proceedings in his courts of law. He did nothing to improve them, but he played a careful game which was directed only to saving his immediate followers, his brother and himself. For the others, he sighed and let them go to their doom. It was all he could do to carry out his more immediate program of which the first step was a dissolution of the Parliament that had alternately served and thwarted him for eighteen years. Danby's impeachment and the Exclusion Bill died with the Parliament, but even Charles did not dare delay new elections.

The Shaftesbury faction returned in greater force than ever, and all Charles had won was delay. In his speech from the Throne he advised them to let personalities alone, cease their quarrelling, renew taxes which had recently lapsed. They replied by returning to the attack on Danby. The King had showed his confidence in the minister by giving him a marquisate and a general pardon for any offences. He now informed the Commons that all the letters to France had been written at his own express order, but again the House ignored him. A bill of attainder was passed against the new Marquis, and although it was never pressed in the Lords, Danby spent the next few years quietly in the Tower where his King often consulted him on affairs of importance.

Having achieved this victory, the Parliamentarians revived exclusion in a flurry of hysterical resolutions and addresses. " Little Sincerity " won to his side the King's eldest son by dangling before him the prospects of legitimacy and succession to the throne. Charles always maintained the Earl did this out of spite, knowing how grievously his favourite child's defection would wound the father. But he would not let paternal affection stand against royal pride. Charles was inordinately fond of the Duke of Monmouth; he rather disliked the Duke of York than otherwise. But one was a bastard; the other was a legitimate Stuart. The King's sole superstition was his Kingship. To him there was something beyond humanity in it, and rather than see it defiled, he was prepared to risk a beloved son's loyalty, his own life and, what he valued most of all, his ease. He was quite sincere when he declared that rather than make Monmouth Prince of Wales he would " see him hanged up at Tyburn."

He knew the odds were against him. Public fury was running high. Oates, furnished with money and quarters in Whitehall itself, swaggered about the town, the lord of life and property. Dunces and rascals gathered in ale-houses to drink confusion to Popery and to riot through the streets seeking what Catholics they might despoil. The songs about " Old Rowley " had given way to such ballads as

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Would you send Kate to Portugal,
Great James to be a Cardinal,
And make Prince Rupert Admiral,
This is the time.

Would you turn Danby out of doors,
Banish rebels and French whores,
The worser sort of common shores,
This is the time.

Would you our Sovereign disabuse,
And make his Parliament of use,
Not to be changed like dirty shoes,
This is the time.

Would you once more bless this nation,
By changing of Portsmouth's vocation,
And find one fit for procreation,
This is the time.

Would you turn Papists from the Queen,
Cloister up fulsome Mazarine,
Once more make Charles great again,
This is the time.

There was so much to report of fear, hatred, treachery, executions and pillage that an item which at another time would have been widely discussed barely crept into the chronicles of the day: "Mrs. Gwyn, mother to Madam Ellen Gwyn, being in drink, was drowned in a ditch near Westminster." The fact that one Isaac Newton had discovered that objects fall straight down was noticed only by the Royal Society, and they did not believe it. When

Newton, their correspondent at Oxford, wrote them of it, they experimented with tennis balls, which that day fell always to the southeast.

For a brief time Charles checked the onslaughts of his enemies by taking them into his Privy Council where he could hold them responsible to their followers for any of his acts to which they might otherwise be inclined to object in public.

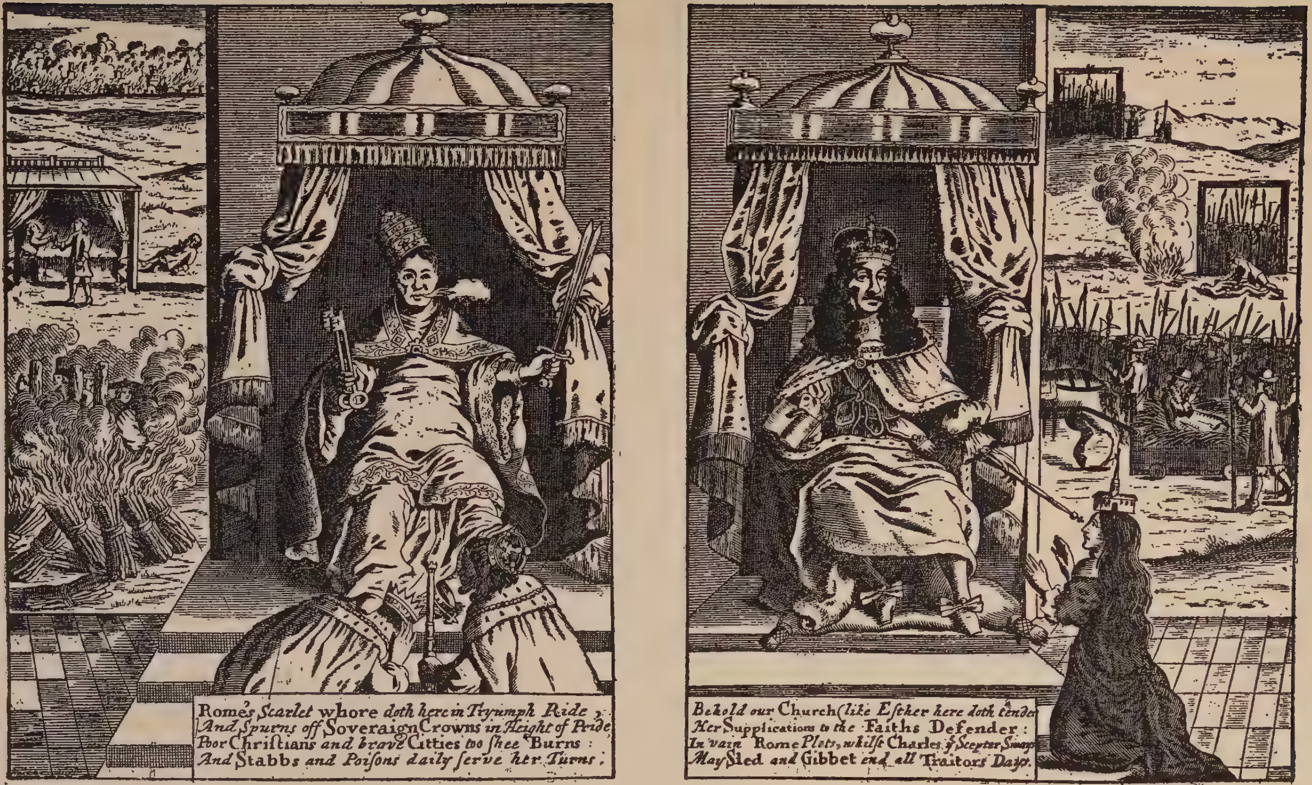
" Odd's fish! " he exclaimed to one of his attendants who ventured to wonder at the seeming surrender, " they have put a set of men about me, but they shall know nothing, and this keep to yourself."

Not only did the King scorn to avail himself of their advice; he would not even permit them the comfort of blowing off steam in a Parliamentary manner. Lord William Russell once began to air a grievance, but his Majesty would have none of it.

" Sit down, my lord," he snapped. " This is no place for addresses."

While endeavouring to keep these men quiet, he tried to bring James into a reasonable frame of mind about religion. Their grandfather, after struggling as the Protestant Champion of France, had decided that his throne was worth a mass. Charles thought the throne of England might be worth giving up a mass. He sent bishops to urge the Duke of York to return to the faith of his country, but the younger brother had all the zeal of a convert and refused to be moved. The King would not attempt anything more forcible than persuasion. When James reported the result of his interview with the bishops, Charles merely suggested that in the excited state of the public mind, a Catholic was better off elsewhere. He sent James to Brussels.

The Scots had felt the unrest of England and chose this


Rome's Scarlet whore doth here in Tryumph Ride ;
And Spurns off Soveraign Crowns in Height of Pride
Poor Chriſtians and brave Citties too ſhee Burns :
And Stabbs and Poiſons daily ſerve her Turns ;
Behold our Church (like Eſther here doth tender
Her Supplications to the Faiths Defender :
In vain Rome Plots, whilſt Charles yͤ Scepter Sways
May Sled and Gibbet end all Traitors Days.

Charles and the Pope

"Our most religious King."

moment to break out in rebellion against their very real grievances. Lauderdale ruled them with a cold brutality, and they thought the time a good one for recovering their liberty of religion, for their Presbyterianism had been persecuted by the Church of England as rigorously as the English feared they would be treated by Catholics. Monmouth, who had several years before been made Captain General of England, marched against them. The " Protestant Duke," as he was beginning to be called, won an easy but showy victory at Bothwell Brig. He had crushed the revolt and he celebrated with an almost royal progress through the country. It was so ostentatious that Charles called him home and dismissed him from his office for presuming to omit the bar sinister from his coat of arms. They had already had words over the erasure of the word " natural " in a patent made out to " our natural son, James, Duke of Monmouth."

By this time the leaders of Parliament had discovered the disadvantage of office under a monarch who did not trust them. They resigned, and devoted themselves to pressing the exclusion of James from the throne and the attainder of Danby. Charles allowed the first bill to pass its second reading amid the triumph of his enemies, who were sure that now he was beaten. Then, declaring " I will submit to anything rather than endure the gentlemen of the Commons any longer," he dissolved Parliament. In its whole quarrelsome life it had passed just one measure, the Habeas Corpus Act, and even here it displayed its insouciant irresponsibility. The great bulwark of English liberties owes its existence to a joke of the tellers, who on the final reading of the bill amused themselves by counting one very fat lord as ten.

The fury of the Papist hunters, meanwhile, was unabated; the new House of Commons was virtually the same as the old, and the Tower was full of men awaiting trial or being held on merest suspicion. Among them was " Mr. Pepys, an elderly gentleman who had known softness and the pleasures of life." He was imprisoned in the hope that his timidity would lead him to give damning evidence against the Duke of York, whom he had served as Secretary of the Admiralty. Pepys was one of the more fortunate suspects, for he was released after a few months. The most obscure of men were hounded to their deaths. Nor was high rank any protection. Catholic peers were excluded from the House of Lords and some of them were attainted on the most absurd grounds. One of them, the Earl of Stafford, a man whose faculties had been impaired by age, was put to trial and bullied to the scaffold, while Charles from a curtained box watched the proceedings and thought of his father who from this same spot had seen Strafford fight for his life. The King made no more move to interfere than his father had done, but in the case of his own servants, he remained firm.

" Let them do what they will," he said. " I will never part with any officer at the request of either House. My father lost his head by such compliance, but as for me, I mean to die another way."

He was so careful of his own safety that he could not be induced to risk his already weak defences by interposing on behalf of men he knew to be innocent but to whose fate he was personally indifferent. Archbishop Plunkett of Ireland was condemned by his peers, but the blood lust was nearly glutted and a few of those who voted death became a little doubtful of their justice before the sentence was executed. One of them came to the King to plead for pardon because he knew the victim was guiltless.

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"Then, my lord, on your own head be his blood," said Charles. "You might have saved him if you would. I cannot pardon him because I dare not."

The Archbishop, however, was the last sacrifice to the piety of England. The Popish Plot had served its turn. The nation could never be more thoroughly aroused against Catholicism than it already was. The revolutionaries who planned to wrest power for themselves by attacking the Throne through its Catholic heir had all the ammunition they needed. Charles saw with relief that the rest of the battle would be one of politics, with religion no more than the rallying cry it had always been, and in politics he felt himself a match for all England.

Twenty-six

THE most exasperating feature of the whole struggle was that the King had to fight men who were using his popularity to strengthen their own hands. They went about crying that their Protestant monarch was in danger. They stirred up a cloud of protective sentiment directed to preserving him from those of his brother's aspirations which he wanted to see realized. They led the people to believe that the King's interests were those of his enemies and that only in Parliament were there safeguards for his person.

Prorogation and dissolution were alike powerless to stop the determination of the Commons to exclude James from the throne. Every time the House met the same bill was brought in. His Majesty's efforts to defeat it were making so little impression that most observers regarded his success as impossible. One sympathetic versifier predicted defeat in the lines

> Thus have I seen a King at chess,
> His rooks and knights withdrawn,
> His queen and bishops in distress,
> Shifting about, growing less and less,
> With here and there a pawn.

However, Charles was a master of the pawn game, and a good deal of his shifting about was directed to a purpose which was not immediately apparent to the ordinary player.

“Give them rope enough and they will hang themselves,” he said cheerfully of his opponents, and his seemingly inept moves were intended only to encourage them to expose themselves by a rash attack.

He could stave off the Exclusion Bill with his power to adjourn Parliament, but he could not so easily check the growing agitation that he declare Monmouth his heir. The Shaftesbury group spread a rumour that proof of Charles' marriage to Lucy Walter was actually in existence. The papers were supposed to rest in a mysterious black box, and the leaders of the Opposition offered to produce such documents if the King would only agree to recognize them as genuine. Instead of yielding to the temptation of legitimizing his favourite child, Charles called the Privy Council to hear his solemn, sworn declaration that he had never been married or promised to any woman save Queen Catherine. The statement was duly published to the world in the Gazette. Still the faction continued its efforts on behalf of Monmouth. One pamphleteer cast some sly reflections on the accuracy of his Majesty's memory.

“It is possible,” he wrote, “for princes, especially such as have accompanied with many women, to have weak memories and to forget upon what terms they contracted their first friendships with them. For, finding how their familiarity arose with others of that sex, they may grow by degrees into a kind of persuasion that their interest in all was established upon no better terms. Or, if they should not be supposed so forgetful as this amounts unto, yet the love of change may make them stifle their knowledge, especially when the objects of their fresh amours cannot be otherwise brought to entertain their flame but with a provision for their own honour."

With the horrors of the Popish Plot still in full swing, Charles threw Shaftesbury, James and the followers of both into a lamentable state of consternation by falling sick. He had a sharp, short attack of fever following a chill contracted by walking along the river after a hard tennis match. Both sides knew that if he should die, civil war would be inevitable, and neither was prepared for it. The Duke of York came rushing home from Flanders, but he arrived to find Charles eating with much gusto his first solid food. The heir to the throne was promptly sent into exile again, but after a short time was permitted to come back to the domains over which he would one day rule. He was, however, kept out of the way by giving him Scotland to administer. There he carried out Lauderdale's policy with a harshness that surprised men who had known him in his amiable youth. But James's disposition had been spoiled by the persecution to which he was being subjected, and he took it out on the Scots.

The Exclusion Bill was being pressed with renewed vigour. Popular opinion was so strongly against the King's policy and so enthusiastic for the King's person that Charles had to issue an edict forbidding his loyal subjects to celebrate his fiftieth birthday with the usual parades and bonfires. He did not propose to suffer the irony of having a revolution succeed on the pretence of rejoicing over the anniversary of his birth and Restoration.

His enemies were bold enough already. A few weeks after the quietest May twenty-ninth in twenty years, "Little Sincerity" appeared before the Grand Jury to accuse James, Duke of York, of being a "Popish recusant" subject to the penalties prescribed in the laws against Catholics. He also denounced Louise, Duchess of Portsmouth, as a common nuisance. The latter charge he withdrew upon the royal mistress's promise to use all her influence to persuade her lover to allow the Exclusion Bill to pass. She did her best, but Charles would not listen to her. He disposed of the indictment against his brother by prematurely dismissing the jury.

In spite of great provocation Charles held to a conciliatory policy which the faction persisted in regarding as weakness. He repeatedly offered the nation any guarantees it might ask for the security of religion short of altering the legitimate succession. He announced his willingness to sign a bill which would set up a regency to rule during the life of a Catholic King. But he insisted on James becoming King. No earthly power, he argued, could take away the rights of a legitimate heir. Kings were not given the privilege of naming their successors, and certainly Parliament could not claim a power which royalty itself did not possess.

This moderation, the justice of his position according to any impartial interpretation of the constitution of England and the judicious use of that potent weapon, patronage, gradually won Charles a considerable support. He bid against Louis for votes which could be bought. Men who relied upon government or court positions, aspirants to judgeships, tax farms, trading privileges, military or naval commissions, were told just how they must vote if they expected royal favours. Men who honestly feared the potential anarchy of government by a House of Commons came over to the monarchical camp and were strengthened in their belief by the King's obvious charm and intelligence. The clergy overwhelmingly supported the theory that God had ordained the succession of the crown and man might not with impunity question the divine will. Unfortunately they did not have as much influence with their flocks as might have been wished.

In the excitement the rival factions began calling each other vile names. The King's men sneered at their opponents as " Whigs," an expression hitherto reserved for an especially thieving, canting breed of Scots maurauders. Shaftesbury's followers retorted with the epithet " Tory," applied in Ireland to the most superstitiously ignorant, treacherous, bloodthirsty bogtrotters.

The immediate aim of the Whigs was to have a Parliament in session long enough to pass the Exclusion Bill. They sent up petitions for an early meeting, signed by thousands of gentlemen all over the country. Such interference displeased the King intensely but the tone in which he rejected the request was governed by the prospect of reclaiming the petitioners. To the intractable London deputation he said frigidly:

" I look on myself as the head of the government, and mean to do what I think best for myself and my people."

But to a group of Whigs from Berkshire, his Majesty was more affable.

" We will argue the matter over a cup of ale when we meet at Windsor," he told them, " though I wonder my neighbours should meddle with my business."

The Tories were not letting these petitions pass unanswered. They prepared counter-documents expressing abhorrence of Whig utterances. These " abhorrers " were organized by a clever, unscrupulous lawyer named George Jeffreys, who collected so much evidence of support for his master that Charles was convinced he had been shifting about long enough to risk receiving a direct attack. He permitted the House of Commons to pass the Exclusion Bill, while he prepared to make his stand against it in the Lords. Against him the chiefs were Shaftesbury and Buckingham. The Duke was nursing a few ambitions of his own. Through his mother he was descended from Edward IV, who had reigned two hundred years before, and he dared to dream, and even to dream aloud, of securing the throne for himself in the confusion, " a notion," said the French Ambassador, " closely resembling a chimera."

" However," the diplomat added, bewildered by the incomprehensible tangle of English politics, " in this country chimera are not so absurd as elsewhere."

At the head of the royal forces in the Upper House was a comparative newcomer to that body, George Savile, who was to become Marquis of Halifax. He had one of the most balanced, powerful intellects in England. He was an eloquent, convincing speaker, a brilliant writer and such a thorough logician that he could always phrase an opponent's arguments better than the opponent could. Then he would proceed to demolish them. Neither he nor his colleagues were admirers of James, and in their hearts they agreed with Charles' opinion of the Duke of York. But they preferred a stupid King to a revolution, and they did not anticipate the events which Charles foresaw.

" I am weary of travelling," he once said. " I am resolved to go abroad no more. But when I am dead and gone, I know not what my brother will do. I will take care to leave my kingdoms to him in peace, wishing he may keep them so. But this hath all my fear, little of my hopes and less of my reason, and I am much afraid that when my brother comes to the crown he will be obliged again to leave his native soil."

The Whigs were making one last effort to induce Charles to consent to their bill and to legitimize Monmouth. They argued that only thus could he protect his own life and the liberties of the people from Popish plotters. He was, they cried, their All and they were working only for his good.

" Assure yourselves I intend to take a greater care of my own preservation and that of my people than any of you all that pretend so much concern for the security of my person," he retorted, adding that in any case what they proposed was illegal.

One of them pointed out that appropriate laws could be made to meet any possible objections.

" My lord," the King replied, " if that is your conscience it is far from being mine, for this cannot be done without overthrowing all religion and law. In fine, assure yourselves that as I love my life so well as to take all the care in the world to keep it with honour, so I do not think it of so great value after fifty to be preserved with the forfeiture of my honour, conscience and the laws of the land."

The conversation took place in the House of Lords, where Charles came every day to hear the debates on the Exclusion Bill. He listened, apparently unmoved, as speaker followed speaker, pouring forth bitter invective quite as freely as if he had not been there. Even Monmouth gave his views without reserve. He supported the bill, he said, as a dutiful son, as an act of piety to preserve his father's life. Only then did the King display any emotion.

" The kiss of Judas," he muttered.

At last the interminable eloquence was over. Halifax alone had spoken sixteen times, and he carried his point. The bishops, almost in a body, marched to the division with the King's friends, and the bill was beaten. The attack upon true monarchy had been turned back, although Shaftesbury continued to struggle. " Little Sincerity " was all for introducing a new Exclusion Bill and forcing Charles to divorce the Queen. But the King had a move in the game too. He made it — a dissolution — and it was very nearly a checkmate, for the new Parliament was summoned to meet at Oxford, the traditional seat of royalist loyalty. Charles did not propose to have members overawed by the boisterous Whiggery of London. News writers gave the move the tribute of their superlative expressions of fear or triumph, depending upon their politics. One of them sandwiched in this brief item:

"William Penn, the great quaker, is making preparations for his voyage to a part of America called Pensilvania, which his Majestie hath been pleased to give him a grant of."

As Penn sailed away to found an ideal commonwealth of brotherly love, the nation he left behind him was again primed for civil war. Whigs and Tories, each afraid the other was plotting some aggressive move, were arming in self-defense. Shaftesbury had organized a band of enthusiasts into the "Green Ribbon Club" and they made no secret of their suspicion that his Majesty meditated some treachery that was quite outside the peaceful rules of politics. They rode up to Oxford in a body, well armed and strongly attended. Charles, fearing their violence as much as they feared his, had his guards drawn up ostentatiously along the roads. Only an ill-considered blow was needed to set the rivals at each other's throats. But they exhibited heroic self-control, watching each other nervously and fingering the hilts of their swords.

Charles opened the Parliament — in the Geometry School, temporarily the House of Lords — with his usual speech expressive of his desire for harmony and some additional taxes — the revenues had once more fallen to less than £1,200,000 a year. He read his remarks, as was his custom, for as he had explained to a friend:

"I have asked them so often and for so much money that I am ashamed to look them in the face."

He read conciliatory words in a mild tone, but he was quite firm, and three of his sentences told his hearers all that mattered to them.

"I who will never use arbitrary government myself," he declared with perfect sincerity, for he sought only to be absolute, never arbitrary, "am resolved not to suffer it in others. If means can be found that in the case of a Popish successor, the administration of the government may remain in Protestant hands, I shall be ready to hearken to any such expedient. What I have formerly and so often declared touching the succession I cannot depart from."

The unwelcome phrases were about as effective as such utterances usually are. The House of Commons went right ahead in the footsteps of its predecessors. The loyal atmosphere of Oxford did nothing to restrain the Whigs. But it was their last chance. Before he met them, Charles had once more made his peace with Louis. The French King signed another secret treaty which gave his cousin £200,000 a year in exchange for benevolent neutrality towards French Continental ambitions. The pension made up the deficit in English taxes. It also enabled Charles to maintain his stand when Shaftesbury made one last attempt to coerce him into yielding.

"My lord," the King told his opponent, "let there be no self-delusion. I will never yield and will not let myself be intimidated. I have law and reason on my side. Good men will be with me. There is the Church which will remain united with me. Believe me, my lord, we shall not be divided."

* * *

A few days after Parliament opened, Charles made his appearance as if to listen to the Lords' debate. Behind him came an unnoticed sedan chair, out of which attendants took some bulky packages. The parcels and Charles disappeared for a few minutes, and when he entered the House he was arrayed in robes of state. The Commons, summoned from their own hall, crowded up to the bar joyfully, their Whig leaders swaggering in the front, for they were sure the King was going to announce his surrender to their will. His Majesty watched the triumphant glances they exchanged. His face wore its usual sullen expression which hid secret amusement, and when he had savoured his jest to the full, he made his little speech:

"Gentlemen, that all the world may see to what a point we are come, that we are not likely to have a good end when the divisions at the beginning are such, therefore, my Lord Chancellor, do as I have commanded you."

That was all. No further explanations, promises or hints. The Chancellor announced without preamble that Parliament was now dissolved, and Charles abruptly left the throne amid deep silence. Changing back into his ordinary costume, he was still chuckling over the ludicrous expressions of surprise which had greeted the announcement. Grinning from ear to ear he tapped a young gentleman of the bedchamber on the shoulder, crying:

"You are a better man than you were a quarter of an hour since. You had better have one King than five hundred."

He stopped in Oxford only long enough to dine in great state to the accompaniment of his favourite music, and then posted for London as fast as relays of coach horses, carefully arranged the day before, could take him. He left consternation behind. The Whigs, who had ridden so bravely into town, their green ribbons fluttering, were struck with a horrid fear. Around them the King's guards were stationed, doing nothing, but no man knew what their orders might be. All efforts to diminish the royal prerogative had failed. Those who had attacked it were sufficiently well versed in the history of their country to remember what happened in the past to popular leaders who had tried to curb despotism. The Tower was furnished for such. The public executioner waited. The laws and the courts would be all against them. And Parliament, their only safeguard, stood dissolved. Now that the King needed no more money, it would not be recalled. In small dejected groups the Whigs slunk out of Oxford, fearfully anticipating the arrival at any moment of a royal officer armed with warrants for their arrest. Nothing like that happened. Charles was not given to celebrating a triumph too soon. They had not yet had sufficient rope, but meanwhile he was in high good humour over the success of his coup.

"I will have no more Parliaments," he told his friends, "unless it be for some necessary acts that are temporary only, or to make new ones for the general good of the nation, for God be praised my affairs are in so good a posture that I have no occasion to ask for supplies."

Nor did the need again arise. For the rest of his life Charles ruled his people without the benefit of their advice as filtered through the Lords and Commons of England.

Twenty-seven

CHARLES' plans for his beaten foes were much more subtle than anything so crudely arbitrary as proscriptions. He saw that the inevitable reaction against too much excitement was taking place among the people who had been yelling so long for blood, and he did not wish to lose the advantage of it by being precipitate. But he did want the Whigs forever out of his way. So he proceeded with great skill and no little refined cruelty to goad them to the point where they would almost literally hang themselves. It was done with the utmost good humour and quite according to the atrocious legal precedents which the victims themselves had followed when they were so triumphantly riding the crest of the Popish Plot scare.

This time it was the King who raised the false cry of conspiracy. He still feared the resourceful Shaftesbury, who was looking for a new opportunity to rally his followers against the throne. Indeed, " Little Sincerity " was boasting that he had " ten thousand brisk boys of London " ready to do his bidding. Charles clapped the Earl into the Tower and then began to look about for tangible proof of something criminal. The only thing he could find among the prisoner's papers was the draft of a " Whig Association " binding the signers to the political aims of their party. It was not a very damning document, nor was it in Shaftesbury's handwriting, but it contained the best evidence available and Catholics had been hung for less. The Whig leader was solemnly accused of high treason, but a London jury of his friends refused to indict him.

"It is a hard case that I am the last man to have law and justice in the whole nation," the King complained when he heard the verdict.

Shaftesbury came out of the Tower on bail rather more dangerous than before he went in, but Charles was not through with him yet. He demanded that London surrender its charter so that such miscarriages of justice could not occur again. His courts were very busy, for the King was using them to terrify his enemies. Oates was arrested for slander, but got bail. James was brought back from Scotland and started a suit against Titus for libel. London, resisting the attack on its treasured liberties, was making a last forlorn appeal to the courts to save the charter. The case shared popular interest with the eccentricities of a mysterious citizen who was alarming peaceful folk.

"There has been much discourse about the citty," a town gossip noted, "of a whipping Tom, who is used to bestow some pains in chastizeing the posteriors of severall females who have fallen into his hands; divers have been severely handled by him; some of them have received great damage thereby."

The fellow was finally caught, and the charter was at last forfeited. Shaftesbury prudently went into hiding, for the new sheriffs of London were earnest Tories and he could not expect to face a second friendly jury. The King had become absolute indeed. He ordered a group of Whigs to cancel their plans for a dinner which they intended as a thanksgiving feast because God had protected the King, the Protestant religion and the liberties of England from the Papists. Charles told them to stay at home, that such a meeting was seditious and tended to raise factions among his loyal subjects. With much the same justice he ordered the arrest of Monmouth, who had tried to repeat his tour of popularity of two years before, for "going about the country in a riotous manner."

The Duke was soon released, but Whig fears had at last been worked up to the proper rebellious pitch. Two distinct bands of them reached the conclusion that their only salvation lay in treason.

Each group meditated a separate brand. The first was never very definitely formulated and the principals were not in strict agreement as to methods. However, all their discussions centred around the use of Shaftesbury's "brisk boys" to seize power for their party. Just how the King was to be dealt with was hardly ever discussed, but the least that could happen to him was that he would be deprived of all real authority and his son named as his legitimate successor. Monmouth was an eager participant in this plot, as were most of the Whig leaders.

While they talked, another quite independent conspiracy, of which few if any of the political chiefs were aware, was being discussed to more purpose. A band of fanatics, ruffians and adventurers had undertaken to murder the King and the Duke of York, thus settling the problems of Catholicism and absolutism at a blow.

Of all the conspirators in either plot, only Shaftesbury displayed a sense of the realities. His schemes were among the wildest of all, but he recognized in time the disturbing fact that there were too many men sharing his secrets. He withdrew hastily to the security of Holland, where in a few months he died, to Charles' great relief. The plots went on without him. The band bent on assassination was raised, by an incredible folly, to more than forty men who spent weeks discussing in taverns and coffee houses the best method of setting upon the King. They relied for success largely upon his Majesty's notorious carelessness in the matter of guards. All through the terrors of the Popish Plot, when his people were sure that thousands of Catholics had designs upon his life, he had scorned to take even the most elementary precautions. As a usual thing he was attended only by half a dozen guards and what friends might happen to accompany him. Nor could he be persuaded to surround himself with a greater armed force. When his brother protested that such recklessness positively invited murder, Charles laughed him away.

" No man in England would kill me to make you King, James," he said.

He was quite right. But James was to be killed too, and at last the plotters hit upon a method they thought would work. The court was at Newmarket where Charles was taking long walks, watching the races—he no longer rode his own horses — and visiting the cockpit, the theatre and the Duchess of Portsmouth. On the way back to London he would be accompanied by James, and the royal retinue was small enough to be easily overpowered by forty men. In the confusion that would follow, it should be just as easy for the political plotters to seize the throne for Monmouth.

The ground for the assassination was carefully chosen. One of the conspirators had a large country place, almost strong enough to be called a castle, the Rye House on the road from Newmarket. Near the entrance the highway narrowed to a bottle-neck only wide enough for one coach to pass. The murderers proposed to overturn a cart at this point as the King approached. When the royal party stopped, the forty armed men would fall upon them and dispatch their business. In case there should be trouble afterwards, the Rye House could be held until the new government sent help.

The program was mapped out with considerable skill, and with appropriate mysteries and codes. In the discussions the victims were never referred to by name. Charles was always " Slavery " and James " Popery." There was, however, one weak link in the plot; the murderers were not sufficiently well informed concerning the King's movements. Before they knew it he was back in Whitehall. Nearly all of Newmarket, including the house at which he was staying, burned down, so Charles came home a day before he was expected.

Disappointed in this, the assassins turned to other schemes of surprising the royal brothers. But by this time some of the lesser ruffians began to think that the rewards of confession might be as great and more certain than this dangerous business which could be upset by accidents. Before the new plans were completed, several of the conspirators had made their choice, and Charles had in his hands the end of the rope which his enemies had obligingly placed around their necks.

The Rye House plot excited quite as much horror among the people as had the Titus Oates' invention. Indeed, it was very much the same sort of thing, with the trifling difference that it had more foundation in fact. It was pursued quite as relentlessly but more coldly, less indiscriminately. Of the actual band of murderers a good many escaped; others exchanged their evidence for their lives, and the rest were speedily executed. There was another difference in the trial of these men that set it apart from the Catholic cases. Then the witnesses had been encouraged to invent more horrid details. Now, when one conspirator, who had been promised his pardon in return for a confession, furnished only a meagre tale, Charles refused to withhold the pardon saying if he did so it would only encourage such fellows to swear away innocent lives.

However, the investigation had unearthed details of the other treasonable Whig plans, and the worst possible construction was placed upon them. Such men as the Earl of Essex, Algernon Sidney, Lord William Russell, who had never considered murder, were linked in the public mind with cut-throats and met the same fate. Essex committed suicide in the Tower; Russell and Sidney met death most gallantly on the scaffold, George Jeffreys being made Lord Chief Justice to preside over the latter's trial. The Whig Party was crushed.

Charles had made his victory complete, but the taste of it was bitter in his mouth. Monmouth, still beloved in spite of defiance, ingratitude and treason, was involved as deeply as any traitor of them all, nor could his guilt be disguised. The thought of punishing him removed all savour from the triumph. The Duke was writing the most heart-rending letters from a place of concealment which his father took some pains not to discover. The erring son was protesting with great oaths that he had never entered into a murder plot. Indeed, he hinted that he had only involved himself in the other in order to keep his colleagues from violence.

"What good can it do you, sir," he added, "to take your own child's life away that only erred and ventured his life to save yours? And now I do swear to you that from this time I never will displease you in anything, but the whole study of my life shall be to show you how truly penitent I am for having done it."

Charles was susceptible to such appeals. He had always believed the boy when he said he would be good, and this case was no exception. He sent word by Halifax, who was pleasing the King immensely by taking Monmouth's part, that he accepted the apology and that Monmouth should remain in hiding until his father could appease James, who was still in a vengeful mood. In the interim the fugitive continued to write how sorry he was and how he was suffering in his remorse torments " greater than your forgiving nature would know how to inflict." Finally the King persuaded his brother to forgive the prodigal if Monmouth begged for it humbly. Accordingly he wrote to one who would be sure to pass the letter along:

" If the Duke of Monmouth desire to render himself capable of my mercie he must render himself to the Secretary of State and resolve to tell me all he knows, resining himself entirely to my pleasure."

The Duke won the privilege of a personal interview with his father first. He came secretly to Whitehall, and Charles was obviously overjoyed to see him again and to think that they might once more be friends. He had written a letter in his own hand for Monmouth to sign, and he had worded the confession much more mildly than the young man had done in his own letters. Monmouth was glad to get off so lightly. He signed; the King pressed his hand, and the son retreated stealthily as he had come. But an overzealous officer recognized him as he was leaving Whitehall and rushed in to ask Charles if he should follow, and arrest the fugitive.

" You are a fool," the King told him brusquely. " James is at Brussels."

◆

The reconciliation was brief. The "Protestant Duke" was far too easily influenced by whoever spoke to him last. Before his pardon was made out, some of his friends persuaded him that to confess all to his father was to betray his old comrades who had risked their lives for him. So he returned again to Whitehall and demanded his confession back. The disappointment drove Charles to a short burst of fury. He declared hotly that now he was through with this young fool forever. He told Halifax to give Monmouth the paper.

"And bid him go to hell," his Majesty added bitterly.

With his father in this frame of mind, with his companions in conspiracy on their way to the scaffold, with the mob howling for more blood, Monmouth decided that England was not the place for him. No one attempted to hinder his escape as he took ship for that refuge of all the politically eclipsed, Holland.

Twenty-eight

IF Charles had lost a beloved son, he had gained what was far more dear to him, peace with power. Men no longer questioned his actions, and they only dared whisper about his motives; no one disputed his absolute rule. The disapproval was altogether *sotto voce* when he restored James to the office of Lord Admiral, utilizing for the purpose that most arbitrary of all debatable royal prerogatives, the power to dispense with an Act of Parliament. He simply signed an order that James need not take the Test.

He was even able to do something for his old project of toleration. The laws against dissenters, especially the new harsh regulations for Catholics, were noticeably relaxed and pardons were issued in sheafs to men convicted under them. The only group still persecuted were dissenting Whigs of pronounced political views, and they were discriminated against on political grounds. While Charles was willing to grant a toleration to any school of theological thought, he was by no means so broad minded when men questioned his own authority. On every side that authority was being upheld in addresses of such slavish submission from counties, towns and corporations that one wit, remembering the impudent language of

Whig petitions not so long ago, remarked that the petitioners spit in the King's face, the addressers in his mouth.

Nothing marred the serenity of his days. His home was as happy as his public life. His wife adored him more than ever, if that were possible, because he had defended her so gallantly during the Popish Plot. His mistresses were not importunate. His children, except for the exile in Holland, were not ambitious. They all lived quietly, almost obscurely, save the young Duke of Grafton, who was winning some popularity by his military advantages. He had gone as a volunteer with the navy and to the Continental wars, where he had distinguished himself brilliantly. His father was very proud to read how gallantly he had behaved.

The King was, of course, managing his brother's family affairs too, that is, all of them save those that concerned the Duke of York's mistresses, an important exception. His Majesty heartily disapproved of these ladies; James had a taste for ugly, clever women.

" I believe my brother's mistresses are given to him by his priests for penance," Charles would say.

But the King was supreme in other matters affecting the York household. James did not even attempt to object when his second daughter, Anne, was married to a Protestant Prince, George of Denmark. The bridegroom was a pleasantly dull youth, who fitted most awkwardly into the life of Whitehall, for he was equally out of place with the gallants, the gamblers, the wits, the scholars and the scientists. His chief interest was food, to which he devoted himself so completely that he was worried about his figure, he confided to Charles.

" Walk with me, hunt with my brother and do justice to my niece, and you will not long be distressed by growing fat," the King advised him.

His Majesty was brimming over with good advice these days, offering it with the easy assurance of one who feels he has done rather well for himself and cannot go wrong instructing others. To an Italian visitor, George Leti of Milan, who wanted to write a history of the court of England, Charles granted his gracious permission on condition that the book give no offence. Leti, who was a good enough historian to know that truth and offence go hand in hand, was perplexed.

" I will do what I can," he said, " but if a man were as wise as Solomon, he would scarce be able to avoid giving some offence."

" Why, then, be wise as Solomon," his Majesty replied genially. " Write proverbs, not histories."

A man of Leti's profession was interested in the court rather than the people of England. There was no political or military history being made — that would have to wait for Charles' successors — and the masses were considered unimportant, but the manners and customs of Whitehall were worthy of the Italian's pen. Indeed, they inspired a more accomplished scholar, and Saint Evremond epitomized years of careful observation at Charles' court in a letter he wrote to a young friend. This was one of Hortense's page boys, a child of obscure parentage but the possessor of a lovely soprano voice, which the King himself came to hear. Saint Evremond warned the lad that this gift was all he had to make his fortune, and that he would do well to secure himself against the natural loss of such an asset.

" But you are afraid, you say," wrote the man of learning, " that you will be less in the ladies' favour. Lay aside all such apprehensions; the age in which we live is not an age of simpletons; the merit which follows the operation is well known, and for one mistress that Mr. Dery, as he was made by nature, might have had, Mr. Dery softened by art shall have a hundred. You are sure, then, of having mistresses enow, which is a great happiness; you will have no wife, which is being free of a great evil; happy in having no wife, happier in being without children. Mr. Dery's daughter would be got with child; his son would be hanged, and what is yet more certain his wife would make him a cuckold. Secure yourself against those misfortunes by a speedy operation. Thus you will be devoted purely to yourself, proud of so small a merit which will make your fortune and procure you the friendship of all the world. If I live long enough to see you when your voice becomes rough and your beard grows, you will be much blamed by everybody. I desire you to prevent this, and believe me to be your sincere friend."

Whether young Dery followed this advice or not — it is probable he did not, for he disappeared from the world of fashion — he might well have found Saint Evremond's views supported by the troubles into which an affair of the heart plunged his patroness at this time. Hortense fell in love with a visiting Swede, Baron de Banier, and she was so open in her regard for him that one of her Italian nephews, who was also on a visit to London, thought the family honour was at stake. He challenged the Baron and killed him. His aunt was disconsolate. She was afraid Charles, who hated duelling, would blame her and stop her pension. She was afraid her nephew would be punished. And she sincerely mourned her lover. She talked wildly in her distress of going back to France, to a convent or even to her husband. Her old friend Saint Evremond rushed to console her.

"England has its conveniences — a great many guineas and the liberty of enjoying them as one thinks fit," he reminded her, but if she was really serious about her intention to retire from society he could give other advice. "All things considered 'tis better for a married woman to suffer with an husband than to suffer with an abbess."

In the end, Hortense decided not to suffer at all. She stayed on in England, entertaining with rare success, gambling and being agreeable to the King. However, no one thought any longer that she would be a serious rival to Louise. The Duchess of Portsmouth was now such a social power at court that when the Moroccan Ambassador came to London she, rather than Catherine or the Duchess of York, the usual hostesses on such occasions, entertained him. The envoy treated her like a Queen and spoke of her young son as a Prince. He was evidently confused by the queer sort of harem which the English King maintained. He supposed, of course, that all these women were his Majesty's wives and he was less scandalized by their number than many Englishmen.

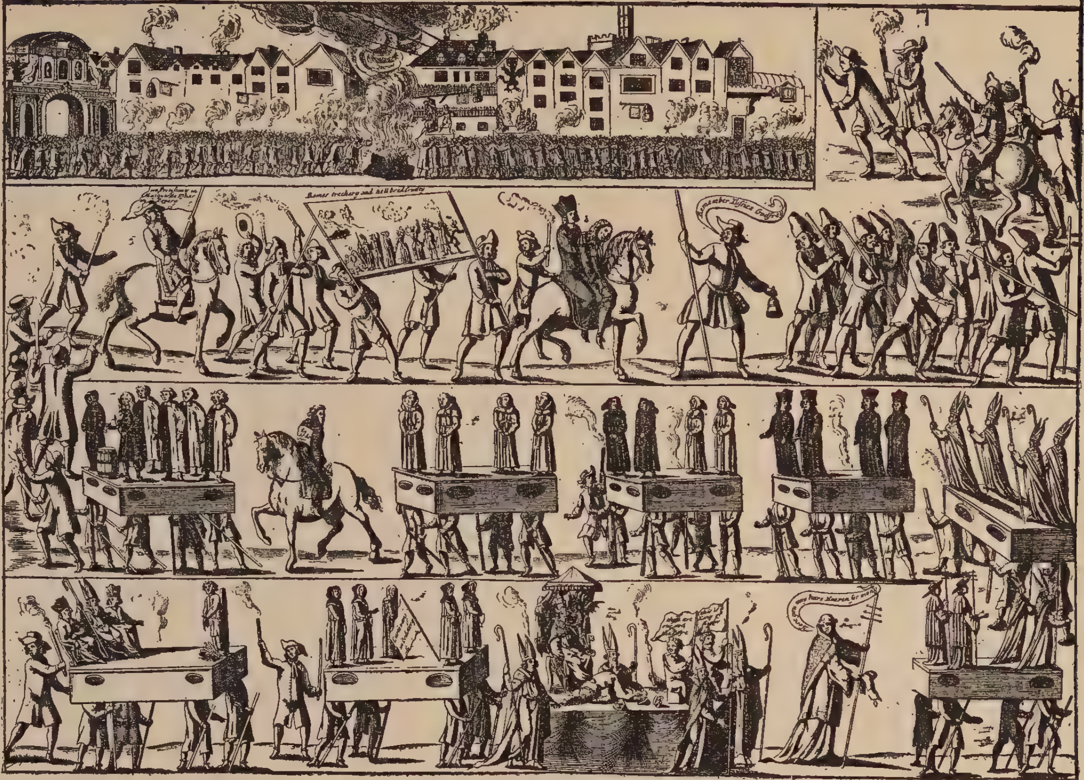
What surprised him much more was the way in which the laws treated men who displeased the royal family. James's suit against Titus Oates was before the courts but instead of the speedy death which such a man would have suffered in Morocco, the perjurer was ordered to pay £100,000 damages and twenty shillings costs. It was a sign of the times to Englishmen that Oates did not even contest the case, for he knew it was hopeless. He could not pay, so he was sent to prison, where he was quite content. It saved him temporarily from worse punishment, and pious, credulous folk who still believed he had rendered the nation a great service supplied him with more comforts than he could ever have earned for himself outside the prison.

* * *

In all England only incorrigible fanatics and such grave moralists as Mr. Evelyn made any complaint about the conduct of foreign affairs, and only the fanatics complained aloud. The rest of Europe was suffering the miseries of war; England was peaceful and prosperous. The merchants of London were scooping up the commerce of all the belligerents. Money poured into the country in unprecedented streams. The scattered colonies were growing into an empire. The King was giving his people a perpetual show, a splendid pageant of beautiful women and gorgeously costumed men of whom the nation was proud. His Majesty's jests were repeated everywhere; his solicitude for common men was extolled, his generosity, good taste, mercy and genius were set forth in lavish terms by sincere admirers, and calculating sycophants. Patriots grumbled that there was no glory in this sort of thing and that the Protestant religion was in danger. France had renewed her attack upon Holland, and although Spain was helping the neighbour of her Flemish possessions, the destruction of the republic seemed at hand. The Danes and the Swedes were at war. All Germany and the Empire were in a state of wild confusion, for the Turks were at the gates of Vienna and wasting the countryside. King Charles was so lost to a sense of what was due his honour as a monarch that he would not join in any of these fights. Individual adventurers did rush off from England to all the wars, however, and two of the King's sons, the Dukes of Northumberland and Grafton, served in the French army at the siege of Luxemburg.

While the Continent was embroiled in struggles which involved the fate of nations, London was enjoying an exceedingly cold and more than usually gay winter. The Thames was frozen over so solidly that coaches could be

THE SOLEMN MOCK PROCESSION of the POPE, CARDINALS, IESUITS, FRYERS, NUNS &c
Exactly taken, as they marcht through the Citty of London Nouember y^e 17^th 1680


Romes trechary and hell bred cruelty
Remember Iustice Godfrey
may have heaven for money

driven across. And the frost held so long that a whole town of gayly decorated booths was built on the ice. Everyone from his Majesty to the meanest apprentice boy thought it great fun to go shopping, listen to music, watch clowns performing and fireworks blazing in mid-river. They all went skating and sledding too, and at night there was dancing and flirting under the benign patronage of a gracious monarch.

The orgy of building, which had been made necessary by the fire, was now at its height. St. Paul's and dozens of other churches were taking shape under the eye of Mr. Wren. Mr. Evelyn was complaining that London was far too large, being already twice as extensive as he remembered it when he first came up as a young man. Charles was taking his part in the general fashion by erecting a new palace at Winchester and plotting improvements for Whitehall. Among these latter was the laying out of a new street, named for the owner of the land, Sir George Downing. At what was to become No. 10 he was putting up a house for the King's daughter, Charlotte.

His Majesty's days were spent after a most regular fashion. He still rose at an hour so early that many of his attendants regarded it as the only flaw in an otherwise perfect master. He had given up strenuous exercise, but he took long, rapid walks in Whitehall Gardens or Hyde Park. He ate enormous meals in public, but he "drank only for his thirst." He went to the play, and in the evening would be seen watching the new game of basset at the Duchesse de Mazarin's or dallying with the beauties at Whitehall or exchanging jokes with the wits at Nelly's. During these pleasantly light occupations he gave part of his attention to the business of government, and sometimes he would talk benevolently of the good of the nation.

" I would have everyone live under his own vine and fig tree," he said. " Give me my just prerogative, and for subsidies I will never ask more unless I and the nation should be so unhappy as to have a war on our hands, and that at most may be one summer's business at sea."

Affairs were in such good order that he was actually thinking of paying some of his debts, perhaps some of his father's too. He began to save up a fund for the purpose, and was putting away an occasional gold piece in his strong box. He had set himself a goal of £100,000 for his first essay at thrift, but the little hoard grew very slowly. His Majesty was not of a saving nature, and somehow there was always someone around to beg for his money and he could never refuse although he " would flee from an asking face." As in the past his creditors had to be satisfied with good intentions.

In all this happiness there was only one real flaw. Son James was still in exile at The Hague, lavishly entertained by William of Orange, who had his own motives for keeping the young Duke's ambitions alive. Holland was not a wholesome place for repentance, and anyway Charles had long since gotten over his anger at Monmouth's rebellious conduct. He consented with alacrity to hear what the young rascal — so he affectionately regarded him — had to say for himself. In November of 1684 the " Protestant Duke " was making another secret visit to Whitehall. Not a soul was present at this interview between father and son, but Monmouth was very cheerful when he slipped back to The Hague. Once again Halifax was drafted to act as intermediary, and in January one of the eloquent nobleman's letters bore in the margin a note from the King that Monmouth might expect to be called back next month. Delay was necessary only because the Duke of York must not be permitted to raise too many difficulties. Charles did not want to gratify paternal affection at the expense of constant bickerings with his brother. He set the stage for the reconciliation scene very carefully and on February third Monmouth wrote in his diary:

"A letter from L (his private code for Halifax) that my business is almost as well as done, but must be so sudden as not to leave time for 39's (James's) party to counterplot."

Twenty-nine

WHILE this letter was on its way, Charles was observed to be in great good humour. He had suffered a few mild attacks of gout during the last few months; for a week a sore heel had compelled him to give up his daily walks, but he still had his appetite and his zest for company. He was not yet fifty-five, and he looked forward serenely to years of easy rule, prosperity, peace, lovely women and witty men. He looked forward to the reconciliation with Monmouth, too, but the mails were slow.

On Sunday, the first of February, despite the idleness imposed by his lame foot, he was cheerful. He drove out in a coach; he dined largely; he went to see Louise, and after a short stay among the company in her apartments retired to his own. It was the turn of his favourite gentleman of the bedchamber to be in immediate attendance. He had taken this eager lad, Thomas Bruce, into his service to teach him the ways of the world and was at some pains to educate the youth in his own code, especially the desirability of keeping secrets. The King also impressed upon him the value of observing what went on about him, and Bruce showed he had learned this lesson by his record of events that night.

" As soon as he had put on his nightgown," the young man wrote, " he went to ease himself, and often more out of custom than necessity, by reason nobody could come in there but the gentleman and groom in waiting; and there he laughed and was most merry and diverting."

He was so merry that Bruce, with the true courtier instinct, thought it a splendid time to ask a favour. It was the penalty of royal good humour to be asked for something every time he seemed to be happy. On this occasion Bruce asked for a place in the guards for one of his relatives.

" Trouble me not with trifles," said Charles, who had grown so adept at parrying such importunities that men who had known both said they found it more pleasant to be refused by him than gratified by his father. " The Colonel will be but too glad to oblige you therein."

His head was full just then of his new palace at Winchester and he went on to speak of that. He asked his young friend why he never joined the parties that went down to see how the work was progressing. Bruce replied that he did not like to thrust himself unbid into such exalted company, and Charles laughed heartily.

" Odd's fish! " he cried, " such modesty must sooner or later be rewarded and when 'tis otherwise 'tis the fault of the sovereign. I shall be most happy this week, for my building will be covered with lead."

His Majesty was by this time ready for bed, and he and Bruce retired to the bedchamber. The young man spent the restless night which was one of the burdens of his office. It was bitter cold and a large fire had been built up in the grate. The coals dropped noisily all night. The King's many clocks, all recording different times, rang out the quarter, half and full hours in a ceaseless din of discordant chimes. A dozen spaniels wandered about the room as the fancy seized them, snuffled, scratched, snored. The gentleman of the bedchamber whose turn it was to pass the night here was always kept awake, but Charles, inured to the commotion, usually slept peacefully. Tonight, however, Bruce noticed that he tossed rather restlessly, and when he arose he was pale and silent.

Feeling rather faint, Charles went into his closet to take some medicine. He came out so dizzy he nearly fell, but the dizziness passed and he took his seat by the window to be shaved. The publicity of day was beginning. The barber came in, then Dr. King who was treating the sore foot, then a few early rising courtiers. With a desire for privacy most rare for him to express, Charles asked all but the necessary attendants to wait outside until he was dressed.

He was but half shaved when suddenly he slipped sideways in his chair and fell unconscious into Bruce's arms. The little group in the bedchamber was horribly frightened. Messengers were sent running for James and the chief ministers of state. Dr. King, braving the law which prescribed death to any physician who bled a monarch without the authority of the Privy Council, hastily drew sixteen ounces of blood from the unconscious man's veins. It seemed to do good, for Charles had started to writhe in convulsions and now the twitchings were weaker. But the servants had to hold him in the chair and pry his jaws apart to keep him from biting his tongue.

Soon the Duke of York ran in, wearing one shoe and one slipper. Crowds of alarmed courtiers rushed distractedly about or stood in a helpless knot watching their shivering master. More physicians arrived and then, due permission having been given, they set about the process of torturing the sick man, the only device medical skill could suggest.

In Charles' case it was done most elaborately. He had uraemic convulsions and a form of Bright's disease which no one of that day understood, so they applied the remedies used in all cases of illness.

Cupping glasses were held to the sick man's shoulders. Eight ounces more blood were taken from him. Emetics, purgatives, clysters, a red hot cautery and blistering agents on the head were administered in rapid succession, and the King was carried to his bed. Here, in spite of all that had been done to him, he regained consciousness.

By this time a dozen doctors had gathered in consultation and James was taking full charge of everything. He told the physicians to use their best skill. He posted extra guards around Whitehall to prevent possible disorders when the people should learn that their beloved ruler was dying. He gave orders to close all the ports so the news might not reach Monmouth or William of Orange, either of whom, James believed, was capable of seizing the opportunity to start a Protestant uprising. The French Ambassador with difficulty obtained leave to send Louis one letter of warning.

The patient's return to consciousness did not release him from his tortures. Without a murmur of complaint he bore a succession of blisterings, plasters, and horrible-tasting drugs, including considerable quantities of the new medicine, quinine. More and more blood was drained from him, and when he was so weakened he could scarcely move, cauteries were applied to sting him back to consciousness. Other annoyances were also used.

" Spirit of sal ammoniac," one of the physicians wrote in his report of the case, " was applied now and again to his Most Serene Majesty's nostrils, both as a cerebral stimulant and to excite sneezing."

Through it all, Charles retained his kindly wit. He tried to jest with those about him, while the doctors wracked their brains for more remedies. They had nearly exhausted their repertory on the first day. Tuesday and Wednesday all they could think of was to bleed the patient again and give him a soothing drink composed of black cherry water, flowers of lime, lilies of the valley, peonies, spirit of lavender, pearls and white sugar candy. But Wednesday evening the convulsions returned, and as a last resort they administered spirit of human skull.

Even that was unavailing. Thursday morning all hope save of heavenly intervention was abandoned. Throughout the day vast crowds of obviously worried citizens gathered in the churches to pray for a miracle. In the principal houses of God chaplains relieved each other every fifteen minutes. And in the royal bedroom bishops were urging the King to take the last consolation the Church of which he was the head could offer him, but he put them off, saying there was plenty of time to think of that. The apartment was full of anxious noblemen waiting for the end, and James was almost always at his brother's bedside. Everyone was thinking of what might happen when their master was dead and a Catholic would claim his throne.

" I am sorry, gentlemen, to be such an unconscionable time a-dying," Charles murmured as he looked up at their woeful faces.

Queen Catherine had come to take her farewell, but the painful agonies of the husband she had loved so well and of whose kindness she was never weary of writing, overwhelmed her with such grief that she had to be carried to her own room. Here, weeping and distracted, she sent one of her attendants to entreat his Majesty to forgive her for any faults she may have committed towards him. In his weakness, Charles was moved to tears by so much humility.

"Alas, poor woman!" he muttered. "She beg my pardon? I beg hers with all my heart; take back to her that answer."

Outside his apartments the Duchess of Portsmouth moved restlessly, ignored by everyone save the French Ambassador, for her reign was over and no one had yet time to display the hatred they all felt. At the bedside James, after having taken all the precautions he could think of to insure his peaceful accession to the throne, was considering his brother's soul. Waving the nearest bystanders away, he whispered a proposal that he bring a priest to make the King's peace with God and the true faith. Afterwards, James declared that his brother had long inclined towards Catholicism, so that he was not taking advantage of a dying man's weakness. However, the King was conscious only at intervals, during one of which he embraced the suggestions, according to James, and whispered back:

"For God's sake, brother, do, and please to lose no time." Here he paused and then added, "But will you not expose yourself too much by doing it?"

"Sir, though it cost me my life, I will bring one to you," James replied.

To everyone's surprise, he ordered all but two of the crowd of courtiers from the room, and a few minutes later a disguised priest slipped up the private stairway Charles had so often used to reach his amours and his adventures. The newcomer was John Hudleston, the same who had helped the King's escape after Worcester. For that service he was always exempted by name from the laws against Papists, and now he came with awe to administer extreme unction to so illustrious a convert. It did not take long, and as Hudleston departed, secretly as he had come, the doors were thrown open and the anxious horde came pouring back into the room.

Among them were the King's children, all save Monmouth, and one by one Charles called them to his bedside. To each he gave his paternal blessing, but he refrained from any last words of advice. In life he had not tried to mould their conduct, so now he only embraced them and listened with a faint smile to their tearful protestations of love. The scene so profoundly affected the already agitated courtiers that the whole mob of them went down on their knees where they were and with bowed heads they too received the royal benediction. In the streets outside the palace a shifting mass of the plain people stood, fearfully whispering gloomy prophecies of the woes that would now envelop England.

Many of them watched all night while in the close atmosphere of the crowded sickroom, their King fought for breath. Despairingly the physicians used their lancets again, and managed to squeeze twelve more ounces of blood from their exhausted patient. But even they did not expect this operation to do any good, and at dawn they were obliged to hold the dying man upright so he could breathe. Gasping, he asked that the curtains be drawn and the windows opened. For a few moments he gazed out into the dull light of early morning. Then he turned again to his followers. He spoke with ever-increasing difficulty as he urged them to be loyal to their new King. To James he murmured his last wishes. He wanted his brother to be kind to his children.

" And let not poor Nelly starve," he whispered.

The long agony was over now. At ten o'clock Charles

* * *

Stuart slumped limply into the arms of those who supported him, and they lowered him to his pillows. For two hours he continued to breathe, loudly, irregularly, so painfully that the unconscious body twisted about on the bed. At last a few minutes after noon, that too ceased; a great hush, in which the confused ticking of a dozen clocks sounded discordantly, fell over the room, and Thomas Bruce through his tears was surveying the scene of which he was to write:

"My good and gracious King and master, Charles the Second, and the best that ever reigned over us, died in peace and glory, and the Lord God have mercy on his soul."

NO King of England ever died more beloved of his people; none was so unceremoniously hurried to his grave. James, busy with the congenial task of assuming the power his brother had left him, did not even attend the funeral. He dared not bury his dead with proper Catholic rites; he would not permit Church of England ceremonies. So in the darkness of a winter's night a coffin covered with the royal purple was carried to Westminster Abbey with only a procession of noblemen headed by Prince George of Denmark to attend it. For two hundred years not even his name marked the tomb of King Charles.

The society he had created died with him. The reckless, delightfully foolish, merry life at Whitehall could not survive its leader. It degenerated rapidly, for fun went out of the place and shame entered. The resulting debauchery was very dull. The women and the wits who had attracted visitors from all Europe to the gayest court in the world were soon scattered. Louise retired hastily into France where for nearly fifty years she carried on a monotonous struggle of greed against poverty. Nelly, whom James protected as his brother had asked, lived quietly the two remaining years of her life in her house in Chelsea. Barbara Palmer fulfilled Ormonde's prediction and grew old, an unpleasant harridan lustfully pursuing young men. In her sixties she married the dashing "Beau" Feilding, who systematically mistreated her until she discovered he was a bigamist and secured an annulment. Hortense Mancini alone remained at Whitehall, her salon surviving as a haven for scholars and wits through war and revolution with the approval of all men.

Monmouth, the hoped-for reconciliation cut short by death, flung himself recklessly into plots and intrigue which were to end within the year on the scaffold after a brief, inglorious campaign to prove his legitimacy by force of arms. His half brothers and sisters had more sense. They lived and died without attracting much attention, save for Grafton, who attained to military fame and an heroic death at the storming of Cork.

Catherine of Braganza lived on much as she had done when Charles was alive. But at last she tired of slights and murmurings against her religion. She left Somerset House for Portugal and in the land of her birth she became at last a real Queen. As regent she governed that country with immense popularity and considerable skill, but for the remaining twenty years of her life she continued to mourn Charles, remembering him as he had been described to her in her convent days, the royal hero of Europe.

In much less than twenty years the power of monarchy in England was broken forever. For nearly a quarter of a century Charles had succeeded in maintaining it against the attacks of the gentry and nobility of England. He left it more firmly established than it had been since the reign of Elizabeth. But his genius for kingship did not descend upon his successor. In three years Protestant Whig prejudice combined with the new King's stupidity brought about the fulfilment of Charles' prophecy. James was in exile once more, and William of Orange occupied, with Mary, the throne of the Stuarts. William was an able enough Prince, but the revolution which had overthrown James had established for all time the supremacy of Parliament in English politics. Kings now merely reigned, they no longer ruled.

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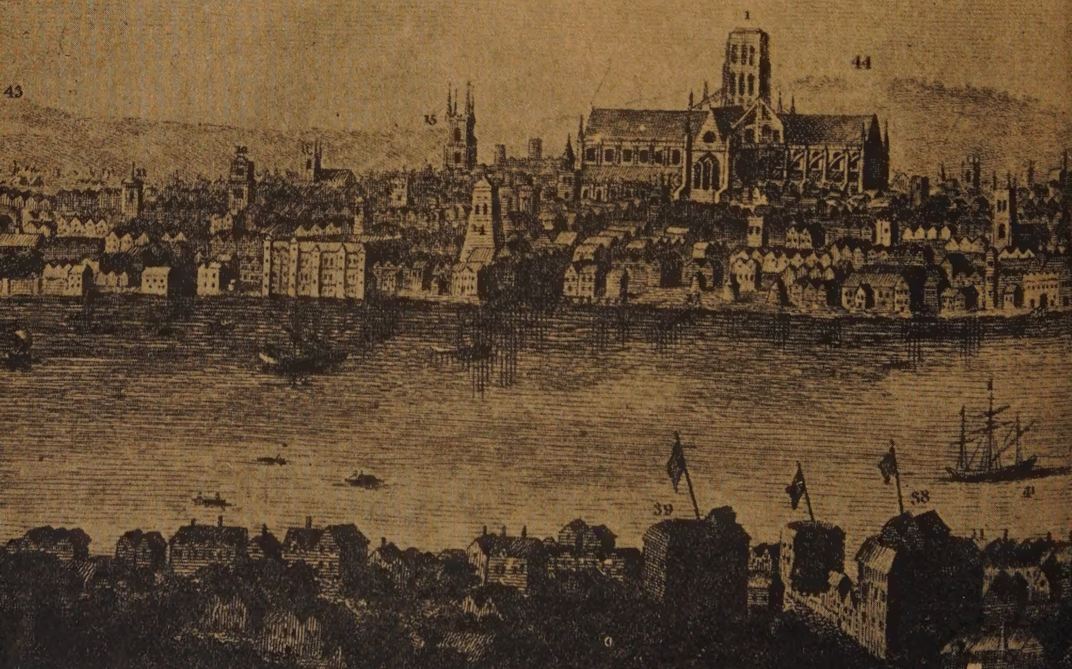
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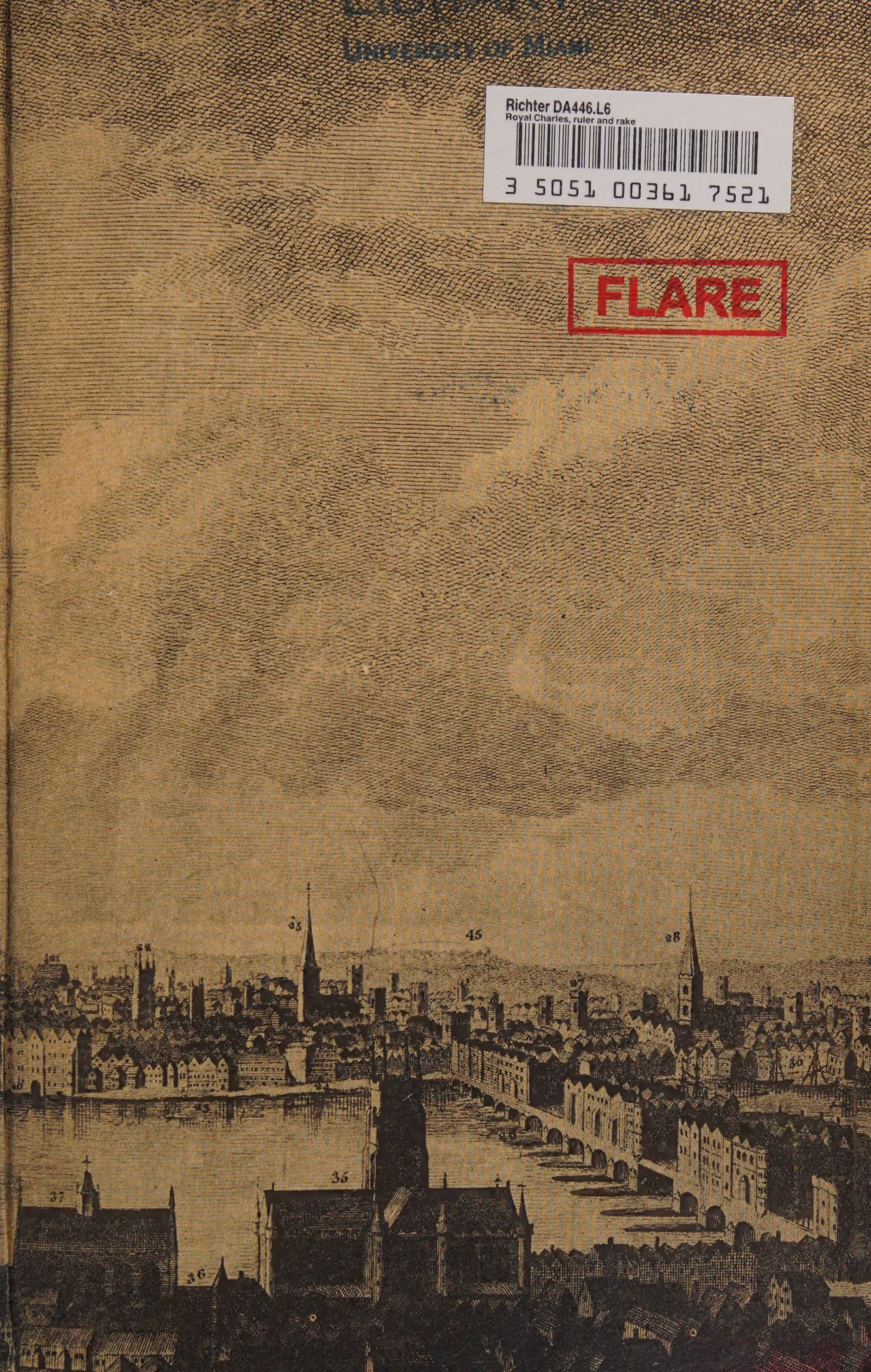
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